



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

Parks, Recreation  
and Historic  
Preservation

Department  
of State

Agriculture  
and Markets

Department of  
Transportation

2016

# NEW YORK STATE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN



This page intentionally left blank



**Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor**

Lead Agencies:

**The Department of Environmental Conservation**

Basil Seggos, Commissioner

**The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**

Rose Harvey, Commissioner

Partnering Agencies:

**The Department of Agriculture & Markets**

**The Department of Transportation**

**The Department of State**

## **DEFINITION OF OPEN SPACE**

Open space is defined as land which is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use. Open space can be publicly or privately owned. It includes agricultural and forest land, undeveloped coastal and estuarine lands, undeveloped scenic lands, public parks and preserves. It also includes water bodies such as lakes and bays. What land is defined as open space depends in part on its surroundings. A vacant lot or a small marsh can be open space in a big city. A narrow corridor or pathway for walking or bicycling is open space even though it is surrounded by developed areas. And while not strictly open space, this Plan also discusses cultural and historic resources which, along with open space, are part of the heritage of New York State.

Inside Cover:

View of Henderson Lake, Tahawus Tract  
acrylic by Lauryn Kashdan-Schrom

Cover:

Clockwise from left. Ashland Pinnacle State Forest by Melody Wolcott; Catskill Challenge 2016; Playground at Roberto Clemente State Park by John Rozell; Essex Chain of Lakes by Melody Wolcott.

This page intentionally left blank

**NEW YORK STATE  
OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN  
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>NEW YORK STATE'S</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN</b>	<b>1</b>
It starts with the land.	1
New York's Open Space Conservation Goals	1
New York's Open Space Conservation Principles	2
<b>A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION</b>	<b>4</b>
A Tradition of Recreation	9
Ensuring Environmental Justice	10
Enhancing Our Approach	10
Continuing New York's Conservation Legacy	13
<b>PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION</b>	<b>16</b>
Recreational Access for All	16
Connecting our Children with Nature	19
Meeting the Open Space Needs of our Urban Communities	21
<b>ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	<b>25</b>
Protecting Our Coastlines	32
Establishing Riparian Buffers and Wetland Protections	35
Mitigation and Adaptation through Sustainable Forestry Management	38
Promoting Urban Forestry and Green Infrastructure	40
<b>ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY</b>	<b>45</b>
Providing Watershed and Water Quality Protections	45
Community Greening for Environmental Justice	48
Health Benefits of Forests and Open Space	48
Connecting To Our Food and Our Neighborhoods	49
Promoting Smart Growth and Improving Our Transportation Uses	51
<b>PROTECTING, UTILIZING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE</b>	<b>58</b>
Supporting Our Working Farms and Forests	58

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Stewarding Our Open Spaces _____	62
Preserving Our Scenic, Historic and Cultural Heritage _____	69
<b>CONCLUSION _____</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS _____</b>	<b>79</b>
NEW YORK STATE'S REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEES _____	79
NEW YORK STATE'S PRIORITY OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROJECTS _____	79
REGION 1/LONG ISLAND _____	80
REGION 2/NEW YORK CITY/5 BOROUGHES _____	86
REGION 3/LOWER HUDSON VALLEY _____	92
REGIONS 3 & 4 _____	106
REGION 4/CAPITAL REGION _____	118
REGIONS 4 & 5 _____	123
REGION 5/EASTERN ADIRONDACKS/LAKE CHAMPLAIN _____	124
REGIONS 5 & 6 _____	132
REGION 6/WESTERN ADIRONDACKS _____	133
REGIONS 6 & 7 _____	137
REGION 7/CENTRAL NEW YORK _____	137
REGIONS 7 & 8 _____	140
REGION 8/WESTERN FINGER LAKES _____	143
REGIONS 8 & 9 _____	146
REGION 9/WESTERN NEW YORK _____	147
MULTI-REGION _____	152
STATEWIDE _____	155
<b>LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES _____</b>	<b>165</b>
RESOURCE INVENTORIES _____	165
PROGRAMS and PARTNERS _____	176
PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION _____	177
ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE _____	187
ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY _____	195
PROTECTING, UTILIZING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE _____	202
<b>REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS _____</b>	<b>221</b>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

LONG ISLAND - REGION 1 _____	221
NEW YORK CITY - REGION 2 _____	229
LOWER HUDSON VALLEY - REGION 3 _____	242
CAPITAL DISTRICT - REGION 4 _____	251
EASTERN ADIRONDACKS & LAKE CHAMPLAIN - REGION 5 _____	257
WESTERN ADIRONDACKS / EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO / UPPER MOHAWK VALLEY - REGION 6 _____	272
CENTRAL NEW YORK - REGION 7 _____	282
WESTERN FINGER LAKES - REGION 8 _____	292
WESTERN NEW YORK - REGION 9 _____	299
STATE AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION _____	308

This page intentionally left blank



# NEW YORK STATE'S OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN

**It starts with the land.** New York has one of the largest public land bases in the country, with spectacular scenery and terrain representing every major ecosystem. Ranging from the salt marshes of Long Island to the alpine tundra of the Adirondack High Peaks and the cascades of Niagara Falls, these lands are held for our state's citizens and represent a legacy of more than 100 years of land conservation and stewardship. Privately held lands, including farms and forests, also contribute to open space protection and are part of the rich fabric of New York's outdoor heritage.

Under the leadership of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, New York has made great strides to continue our conservation legacy including record funding of \$300 million for the EPF in the 2016–17 state budget, the guidance of the *2100 Commission Report* and the passage of the Community Risk and Resiliency Act. We have made great strides in fulfilling our state's mission of protecting ecosystems, preserving open space, preserving a sustainable quality of life, providing for future environmental benefits and recreational benefits on some of the most heavily used public lands. We will need to continue to work in partnerships and provide adequate funding and other tools to accomplish the goals of this Plan, conserving and maintaining land for our ecosystem health and for our own well-being, providing access to recreational resources and increasing tourism.

New York's formal Open Space Conservation program began in 1990 and was designed to ensure citizen input into the land acquisition decisions made by the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). Since its beginning, the program has developed a comprehensive statewide Open Space Conservation Plan (Plan) that represents current open space conservation actions, tools, and programs administered by DEC, OPRHP, the Department of State (DOS), the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), the Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) and the Department of Transportation (DOT). It has become an important and popular voice for conserving our State's open spaces and the quality of life that they provide us.

## New York's Open Space Conservation Goals

- ✓ To protect water quality, including surface and underground drinking water supplies, lakes, streams and coastal and estuarine waters needed to sustain human life and aquatic ecosystems.
- ✓ To provide accessible, quality, outdoor recreation and open space to all New Yorkers.
- ✓ To protect habitat for the diversity of plant and animal species to ensure the protection of healthy, viable and sustainable ecosystems
- ✓ To improve quality of life and overall health in our communities, especially those with limited current access to open space.
- ✓ To maintain critical natural resource-based industries such as farming, forest products, commercial fishing and tourism.

## **NEW YORK STATE'S OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN**

---

- ✓ To address global climate change by encouraging more compact community design patterns.
- ✓ To address global climate change by sustainable stewardship of our forests for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- ✓ To address climate change by protecting our coastlines, broad riparian corridors and wetlands.
- ✓ To address global climate change by adding to the tree canopy in our urban centers and urban communities to moderate temperature fluctuations, thereby lowering our energy consumption
- ✓ To maintain an interconnected network of protected lands and waters enabling flora and fauna to adapt to climate change
- ✓ To protect habitat to sustain the traditional pastimes of hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife viewing
- ✓ To provide places available to all New Yorkers for education and research relating to ecological, environmental and cultural resources
- ✓ To protect and enhance scenic, historic and cultural resources considered to be valued parts of the common heritage of our citizens
- ✓ To strategically preserve, restore, and/or create a matrix of natural systems sufficiently complex and interconnected to be self-sustaining while performing the critical natural functions necessary to sustain us
- ✓ To improve quality of life with targeted green infrastructure that restores environmental benefits of open space, aesthetics, clean air, water, soil and access to nature in disadvantaged communities that have suffered an excessive, unfair share of environmental degradation
- ✓ To identify, sustain, and rebuild natural lands, features, and systems that prevent or buffer impacts to life and property from extreme weather events.

### **New York's Open Space Conservation Principles**

- ✓ Work in partnership with other levels of government, community groups, not-for-profit conservation organizations and private landowners to establish and achieve land conservation goals.
- ✓ When using land acquisition as a conservation tool, deal fairly and openly with property owners on a willing seller/willing buyer basis and work cooperatively with local governments and citizens.
- ✓ Expand the conservation tools available to communities and to individuals for undertaking complementary action at the local and regional level.
- ✓ Establish focused and achievable priorities for state action to conserve specific open space parcels and cultural resources.
- ✓ Identify various conservation tools, methods, strategies and actions for protecting a variety of open space resources.
- ✓ Establish conservation priorities through the objective measurement of urban and rural land conservation needs and broad-based citizen opinion.
- ✓ Identify future funding needs and stewardship expenses when proposing acquisition as a tool for land conservation.
- ✓ Strive to combat sprawl through smart growth planning at the local, regional and state planning level.,

- ✓ Obtain meaningful involvement from the Environmental Justice community in the development of plan priorities.

Open spaces provide many benefits to society, including clean air, clean water, fresh oxygen, pollination of crops, and protection from storm surges and floods among many others. The quantity and quality of the benefits open spaces provide to society depend on society's conservation and stewardship of those resources.

As our State faces challenges, we will need to adapt our strategies accordingly. Fortunately, we have a wide array of methods to achieve our open space conservation goals. On the following pages is a list of conservation tools that we can use to continue to meet our open space needs during these challenging times.

These tools have expanded and become an important part of New York's Open Space Conservation program. Public land acquisition remains a necessary tool for conservation throughout our State, but alternative methods for land protection can also be effective. These tools include: conservation easements, involvement of citizens and their communities; collaboration among landowners; regional and statewide coordination and cooperation in ecosystem-based management and smart-growth efforts; town-wide comprehensive planning; establishment of local open space funding sources; careful management of development incentives; local land use planning; the efforts of non-profit organizations; and practical changes in zoning. Protection of open space, in as many ways as possible, is perhaps the most important investment we can make to counter the effects of climate change. Increasing protection for privately owned open space is especially important to help keep more of New York's 7.6 million acres of farmland as farms, and more of New York's 14.4 million acres of privately owned forestland as forests.

The Plan provides an integrated statewide strategy for land conservation—a holistic view of the inter-connections between our natural resources. Beyond simply identifying individual parcels or areas of land within political boundaries, regional conservation projects and other programs will become prioritized within a landscape context. This complex, interconnected matrix of natural lands and systems that perform utilitarian, life-sustaining functions is our green infrastructure. Conservation goals have been identified for sustaining New York's ecological integrity and rich biodiversity by maintaining viable and representative samples of all ecosystem types in the State, linking State lands to create large-scale biodiversity reserves, maintaining evolutionary and ecological processes (i.e., disturbance regimes, hydrological processes, and nutrient cycles), increasing effectiveness of conservation actions by considering site or parcel location on the landscape, and accounting for human use and impact.

There is significant public support for this type of large-scale, integrated approach because it can be more effective than piecemeal, small-scale efforts. It also considers natural resources at an effective ecological scale; as such, we will become better stewards of our land, infrastructure, and natural resources. By conducting planning, acquisition, and restoration projects at the landscape level, we will accelerate the protection of air, land and water quality; build partnerships to foster an understanding of

how to use and protect the environment; and provide a public role in planning, implementation, and evaluation of resource programs.

**EXAMPLE of TOOLS AVAILABLE for OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION**

*For more information on these tools, see the NYS Department of State's Local Planning Guide  
[http://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Local\\_Open\\_Space\\_Planning\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Local_Open_Space_Planning_Guide.pdf)*

**Partners for Protection by Fee, Acquisition, Easement or Lease**

Land Trusts,  
Not-for-Profits & Community Interest Groups  
Local Government (county, town, city, village)  
Federal Government  
State Government

**Funding for Protection by Fee, Acquisition, Easement or Lease**

Federal

Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund  
Forest Legacy Program  
Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation

State

Environmental Protection Fund  
State Revolving Loan Fund  
State Wildlife Grants

Local

Local Community Preservation Act  
Local Bond Act  
Local Transfer of Development Rights Program

**Municipalities Can Use Land Use Tools for Open Space Protection or to Complement Land Protection**

Municipal Comprehensive Plans  
Natural Resource Inventory  
Local Open Space Plan  
Cluster/Conservation Development

**Funding for Local Open Space Planning**

Adirondack Smart Growth Grants  
Catskill Smart Growth Grants  
Hudson River Estuary Grants  
Hudson River Valley Greenway Grants  
Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan  
Watershed Planning

**Tax Incentives and Credits Can Make It Easier for Landowners to Keep Their Land in Open Space**

State Forest Tax Law  
State Agricultural Value Assessments  
Federal Historic Structure Rehabilitation  
Federal Tax Credit For Gifts of Fee and Conservation Easements  
State Conservation Easement Tax Credit  
Term easement property tax abatement

## **A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION**

### **Our State's Conservation Ethic**

New York State can truly be called the cradle of the modern conservation movement. Beginning with the influence of the Hudson River School, whose paintings transformed the way people viewed nature, the ideals of conservation were first developed in our State.

Prior to European contact, the indigenous peoples who occupied the area that is now New York shaped their landscapes, through fire and other means, to meet their horticultural and foraging needs. Their

## A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

---

Identities were determined in large part by where they lived and the wildlife that shared their environment, and their cosmologies required reciprocal relationships with their environment. The descendants of these original peoples, some living on their original territories today, continue to maintain a close relationship to the Earth and are strong advocates for the environment.

Before the middle of the 19th century, much of our lands were covered by forests, which had been viewed primarily as an obstacle to European settlers; they were something to be cleared for agriculture, or to be cut and exploited for profit.

The paintings of the Hudson River School and growing literature of nature writing gave people a new appreciation of nature for itself, for its wild beauty and remoteness. The public was eager to read about the adventures of Verplanck Colvin, known for surveying the Adirondacks. Publications such as *Forest and Stream* published by George Bird Grinnell, who founded the first Audubon Society in 1886 in New York City, brought awareness of the outdoors to a wider audience.

### **Hudson River School of Painters**

The Hudson River School is the first coherent American art style and was the prevalent genre of the 19th century. With roots in European Romanticism, the Hudson River painters defined a distinct vision for American art through sweeping depictions of its landscape. The movement is credited with having a major influence on America's understanding of its natural environment, its national destiny, the idea that nature reflected the divine, and the desire for touring the country's natural wonders. It is thought to have included more than 100 artists over a span of 50 years, between 1825 and 1875.

### **President Teddy Roosevelt: National Forests, Parks and Monuments**

President Theodore Roosevelt was deeply affected by the power and beauty of nature, and it became a defining force in his life. He and like-minded New Yorkers sought to reverse the exploitation of nature such as uncontrolled logging, commercial hunting, and extermination of birds such as egrets for their plumes to adorn hats. As president, he established a conservation legacy of national forests, parks and monuments.

Recognition of the healthful benefits of nature led to the building of magnificent urban parks to bring the healing beauty of natural scenery to city dwellers. Frederick Law Olmsted brought a new vision to park design, creating naturalistic gardens. His parks transformed many of New York's cities, such as Buffalo, with its green necklace of exquisitely landscaped parks. Olmsted's most famous park—Central Park—is a stunning 840-acre rectangle of green in the heart of Manhattan.

### **Our State Forest Preserve Act**

By the 1880s, less than 25% of our State was forested, and the remaining uncut forests in the Catskills and Adirondacks were quickly being logged. In 1885, our State created the Forest Preserve Act to protect portions of our lands in the Catskills and Adirondacks from further exploitation. This Act was

## A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

---

strengthened in **1894** by the “forever wild” amendment to the New York State Constitution, creating the first state-protected wilderness in the world, ensuring that Forest Preserve lands...

“shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.”

Today, New York's Forest Preserve is the largest state-designated wilderness in the country.

### **Our State Parks**

Recognition of the scenic value of New York's unique natural features also led to the establishment of the first State Park at Niagara Falls, established as a State Reservation in **1883**. It was soon followed by other State Parks, such as the Palisades along the Hudson River, the natural springs at Saratoga Springs, and the Genesee River Gorge at Letchworth State Park, known as the “Grand Canyon of the East.”

### **New York City: A Need for Clean Water**

New York City's need for clean, safe, drinking water led to the development of a huge water supply infrastructure upstate, beginning with construction of the Croton Aqueduct in **1837**. The first reservoirs were built in Westchester and Putnam counties and were followed by development of the Catskill watershed, beginning with the 1905 legislative authorization for New York City to acquire lands and build water supply infrastructure. The value of forests for the protection of our water supplies was one of the early incentives for preservation of forest land, with the City of New York buying thousands of acres adjacent to its reservoirs.

### **The Conservation Commission and Department**

In 1911, the Conservation Commission, the predecessor of today's Department of Environmental Conservation, was created by legislation to consolidate the functions of the Forest, Fish and Game Commission, the Forest Preserve Board, the Water Supply Commission and the Water Power Commission. Combining these commissions into a single entity reflected a growing awareness of the interconnectedness of forests, wildlife habitat and water resources, and greatly enhanced the state's ability to protect the environment and to respond to new environmental challenges, such as rapid soil loss and increased flooding from marginal farmland, and rapid logging and numerous fires that left vast amounts of land stripped of vegetation. After the Conservation Commission was reorganized into the Conservation Department in 1927, reforestation efforts took on new importance when the Department began to acquire degraded farmland outside the Forest Preserve.

### **Restoring Productive Woodlands**

When the Great Depression hit, many farmers who had cleared woodlands for farming could no longer make a living on their worn out, marginal agricultural land. The **1929** State Reforestation Act and the **1931** Hewitt Amendment authorized the Conservation Department to buy land for reforestation purposes. These lands were known as State Reforestation Areas and were the beginning of today's

State Forest system, which now encompasses more than 770,000 acres. The Conservation Department began a massive tree planting program to restore these lands for watershed protection, flood prevention and future timber production. Today, these areas are covered with healthy forests.

During the Depression, the federal Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), founded by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, planted millions of tree seedlings from state tree nurseries on the barren soil of the new State Reforestation Areas—work that provided employment for thousands of young men. The CCC also played a major role in building and enhancing New York’s state parks and forests, which today provide thousands of acres for outdoor recreation.

### **Our State’s Private Forest Lands**

From as early as 1912, there have been provisions for tax concessions on forest lands to promote private forest land ownership. Various laws and amendments have been passed over the years culminating in the present law, Section 480–a of the Real Property Tax Law (480a), which has been in effect since 1974. Section 480a remains instrumental in focusing conservation efforts on 14.4 million acres of privately owned forest lands, encouraging the long–term ownership and stewardship of woodlands to produce forest crops, and thereby increasing the likelihood of a more stable forest economy. This early expression of “sustainable” forest policy has had a major impact on the growth and development of New York’s forests. Since the 1983 passage of legislation establishing Environmental Conservation Law Article 49 Title 3 conservation easements, the state developed its Working Forest Conservation Easement program, which has conserved more than 781,000 acres for sustainable forestry and in most cases public recreation. For a state with such a high population, it is an impressive achievement to have so much well–managed forested land, particularly in comparison to other states in the Northeast.

### **Our State’s Private Agricultural Lands**

The Constitution of the State of New York directs the Legislature to provide for the protection of agricultural lands. When the Constitution was re–enacted and readopted in November 1938, its Bill of Rights reaffirmed that owners of agricultural lands may “construct and maintain for the drainage thereof...under proper restrictions...” Furthermore, in November 1969, the Constitution was amended to “encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural lands for the production of food and other agricultural products. The legislature, in implementing this policy, shall include adequate provision for...the protection of agricultural lands...” Since 1971, the Agricultural Districts Law, Article 25–AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law, has been the centerpiece of state and county–level efforts to preserve, protect and encourage development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food and other agricultural products. As of December 2015, 53 counties across the state have created 217 agricultural districts in which more than 8.75 million acres have been enrolled, including 6.2 million farm acres on nearly 24,927 farms.

### **Robert Moses: Access to Nature and Recreation**

As New Yorkers' growing interest in outdoor recreation led to the establishment of dedicated recreation areas such as campgrounds, public beaches and golf courses, these areas began to be managed more for recreation and scenic beauty rather than strictly for natural resource production. By the **1920s**, cars had already become an important part of the recreational experience. More people were driving their own cars to outdoor recreational destinations, providing ordinary citizens with the freedom and mobility that had formerly been available only to the very wealthy.

Robert Moses created a new recreational infrastructure through an unprecedented development program of new public parks, parkways, beaches, and campgrounds. Between **1924** and **1968**, he transformed much of New York State with his vision of auto-dependent leisure and recreation.

### **Founding of The Nature Conservancy**

After World War II, there was a growing recognition of the importance of preserving natural areas for their intrinsic ecological value. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), founded in New York City in **1951**, undertook its first land preservation project by saving the Mianus River Gorge in Westchester County from development. This was the beginning of New York's land trust movement, where private citizens and conservation groups banded together to acquire significant land parcels. Land trusts, environmental groups and environmental lawyers, with the support of local citizens, stopped many environmentally destructive projects. Today, through the Conservation Partnership Program grants, the state is working in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance to build the capacity of the state's more than 90 land trusts.

### **Earth Day**

In **1970**, on the first Earth Day, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was established. This new agency joined the mission of the former Conservation Department with the missions of various state environmental quality bureaus. Soon after, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation was split from the Conservation Department and elevated to full agency status as the new Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR), since renamed the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The Park and Recreation Land Acquisition Act of **1960**, the Environmental Quality Bond Acts of **1972** and **1986**, and the **1996** Clean Air, Clean Water Bond Act, provided funds for the acquisition of additional State Parks and forest lands, including inholdings or parcels adjacent to existing State Forests and parks. In 1993, the Environmental Protection Fund was enacted, becoming the state's main source of land acquisition funding.

### **Environmental Justice**

Historically, having been located in areas of industrial and commercial activity, low-income, minority communities have suffered an inordinate amount of environmental degradation, with resultant health and quality of life issues. Environmental Justice recognizes the inequity in concentrating the exposure to pollution and other negative human impacts on the environment to which we all contribute, on people who don't have the means to escape those impacts. An effort to target the restoration of open



space and environmental benefits to areas that are completely built up, contaminated, and practically devoid of nature has contributed to creative new ways to restore lost spaces and benefits. Urban open space may now be on a rooftop!

## A Tradition of Recreation

### New York's Recreational Pastimes

Nature is home to many traditional sports as well as to more modern pastimes. Most of us see the outdoors as a place to relax, unwind and exercise in one form or another. Governor Andrew Cuomo made fishing and hunting a priority through his NY Open for Fishing and Hunting initiative. Components of this initiative include a plan to streamline hunting and fishing licenses and reduce license fees to support tourism opportunities and benefit sportsmen and sportswomen throughout the state, rehabilitation of existing and construction of new public boat launches, and the launch of the New York Fishing, Hunting & Wildlife App. Public lands managed by DEC and OPRHP provide important local areas open to hunters.

Like hunting, fishing is a traditional outdoor sport and our state is recognized around the world for having an amazing range of freshwater and marine fishing opportunities. On public lands and easements, it is possible to fish for native brook trout, landlocked salmon, striped bass, bluefish and many other species. Twelve DEC fish hatcheries provide trout, salmon, tiger muskellunge, muskellunge and walleye to establish new fisheries or supplement existing fish populations.

### Our Public Lands and Easements

Our state's public lands have more than 4,500 miles of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Some of these trails are also designated for snowmobiles, horses and bicycles. In the Adirondack Park, there are 2,646,000 acres of Forest Preserve and more than 917,000 acres of conservation easements, of which approximately 814,000 acres include partial or full public recreation rights. The Catskill Park contains 294,000 acres of Forest Preserve lands.

### State Forests

Additionally, there are 797,600 acres of State Forests across New York, acquired for reforestation and for open space and watershed protection, timber production and recreation. New York also has more than 110 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) managed by DEC and designated for hunting, trapping and fishing. They include forests, open fields, streams, ponds, wetlands and scenic vistas. WMAs comprise 202,000 acres of DEC land.

### New York City Watershed Lands

As of December 31, 2015, the New York City (NYC) Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has acquired 138,000 acres of land (including fee title and conservation easements) in the NYC watershed to protect the quality of the drinking water for more than 8 million residents of NYC and one million upstate consumers located in Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster counties.

### **Our State Parks**

OPRHP administers about 334,000 acres of land, including 180 state parks. Nearly 80% of the park system is in natural areas with a wide range of geological features, ecological habitats and species of plants and animals. These include the extensive forested areas of Allegany and Sterling Forest state parks, the gorges of the Finger Lakes parks, islands in the St. Lawrence and Hudson rivers, cliffs at Minnewaska, and the beaches and sand dunes of Long Island.

### **Our Municipal Parks**

For many people, local parks and recreation areas may be the only nearby open space. New York State has over 5,351 city or village, 2,107 town and 461 county-operated recreational facilities. Almost every town, village or city, no matter how small, has at least one green space. Green spaces range from simple sports fields to elegantly landscaped spaces funded by wealthy donors. In addition, many communities are connected by greenways, hiking trails and bike trails.

## **Ensuring Environmental Justice**

### **Providing for All Our State's Communities**

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

To achieve environmental justice, we must ensure that all communities enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and public health threats, as well as equal access to the decision-making process. Fostering environmental justice in New York involves a range of activities that both reduce environmental burdens and target benefits to underserved populations or areas struggling with disproportionate burdens.

The pressing need for open space in underserved neighborhoods across New York City and the City of Yonkers, as well as the Albany area, Syracuse, Binghamton, Rochester and Buffalo, requires a continued focus on conservation acquisition and preservation of smaller sites. The acute lack of open space in these communities makes every square foot of land that is saved an extremely significant, public amenity. It also inspires creativity in greening walls, terraces, rooftops, and other surfaces when there is no space at ground level. Environmental benefits and recreational opportunities are enhanced when small, urban, open spaces can be linked to others, even more so if they can be linked to hubs of natural lands in the surrounding landscape.

## **Enhancing Our Approach**

### **Environmental Protection Fund and Other Funding Mechanisms**

During the lifespan of the Plan there have been a variety of funding mechanisms used to accomplish the goals of the Plan. Some have been consistently recurring throughout the lifespan, like the

Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and others have had one time yet large impact, like the 1996 Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act. The EPF provides funding for several programs including land acquisition, grants for municipal parks and capacity building of land trust, and for stewardship of public lands. Federal funding programs through the Farm Bill and Land and Water Conservation Fund provide for land conservation and stewardship. Under the leadership of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, in 2016 the EPF reached a record level of funding of \$300 million, including \$40 million for land acquisition. Tax incentives at the state and federal level such as the state's Conservation Easement Tax Credit and the newly permanent enhanced federal donation tax credit have encouraged landowners to donate fee or easements for conservation purposes. Several towns and counties across the state have recognized the importance of land conservation to their residents and have provided funding through annual budget allocations, bond acts and community preservation funds utilizing a real estate transfer tax. Regardless of the source or mechanism, the benefits of land conservation described throughout this Plan accrue to the residents of New York State, the nation and the world.

### **Ecosystem Services**

Natural or green infrastructure provides many benefits, referred to as “ecosystem services,” on which our society depends. Examples of natural or green infrastructure include forests, soils, grasslands, parks, wetlands, green roofs, rain gardens and urban trees. They provide the benefits of clean air, clean water, flood storage and control, erosion control, carbon sequestration, natural cooling, drought mitigation, pollination of food crops, conservation of soil and water and recharge of water supplies, provision of medicine, building products, food products, wildlife habitat and preservation of genetic diversity, stormwater management, moderation of climate change, and a steady source of fresh oxygen from plant photosynthesis. Providing stewardship to help sustain our natural resources and their many contributions to our wellbeing is an important, if often overlooked, function of open space, whether in public or private ownership.

A 2010 NYS Comptroller's report, *Economic Benefits of Open Space Preservation*, discusses the benefits provided by open spaces, including ecosystem services. New York's open space resources support the \$59 billion outdoor recreation and tourism industries, the \$20.5 billion forest products industry and the \$39 billion farming industry. A 2002 survey of 27 water suppliers found that for every 10 percent increase in forest cover in a municipal water system's watershed, costs of water treatment decreased by 20 percent. Protection and restoration of flood plains, riparian forests and coastal areas reduce the impacts of flood events.

- An Army Corps of Engineers study on acquisition of 8,500 acres of wetlands adjacent to the Charles River in Massachusetts estimated costs for engineered flood control measures at \$100 million compared to a \$10 million cost to acquire the wetlands.
- The New York City Department of Environmental Protection projects that the costs of preserving and restoring natural drainage features in 16 Staten Island watersheds will save tens of millions of dollars in comparison to the costs of constructing and maintaining stormwater control infrastructure.

### **Ecosystem-based Management via Open Space Conservation**

Protection of our open space is essential for the perpetuation of our varied ecosystems. Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is a growing approach to managing our human activities and natural resources in a manner that fosters healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems able to deliver the resources and services we need and want. The goal of this approach is to move toward a more holistic way of managing our natural resources by evaluating and considering the myriad factors interacting across an ecosystem (e.g., forests and air quality; streams and watersheds).

To sustain our existing ecological integrity, we will continue to work toward:

- Maintaining viable populations of all native species
- Representing, within protected areas, all native ecosystem types across their natural range of variation
- Maintaining evolutionary and ecological processes (i.e., disturbance regimes, hydrological processes, nutrient cycles, etc.)
- Managing species and ecosystems long enough to maintain their evolutionary potential
- Accommodating human use and occupancy within these constraints

New York's policy regarding EBM was established through the 2006 Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act and states, "The policy of the state of New York shall be to conserve, maintain and restore coastal ecosystems so that they are healthy, productive and resilient and able to deliver the resources people want and need." This policy can be applied to all ecosystems in New York, as can the principles of the Act:

- Activities in and uses of the coastal ecosystem are sustainable;
- Ecological health and integrity is maintained;
- Ecosystems' interconnections among land, air and water are recognized;
- Understanding of coastal ecosystems is enhanced;
- Decisions are informed by good science;
- Caution is applied when risks are uncertain; and
- Broad public participation occurs in planning and decision-making.

### **"Landscape" Management**

EBM seeks to focus on the interactions of natural systems, species and human activities occurring across broad regions such as the Great Lakes, Hudson River Estuary, the Atlantic's ecosystems or a watershed. By emphasizing "place-based" management decisions, EBM can help tailor implementation measures and decisions to the issues that exist within specific communities, landscapes or ecosystems. EBM has a slightly different approach and focus but is similar in many ways to landscape-scale Green Infrastructure. Each can be used to inform and complement the other.

### **Threats to Ecosystem Health**

Loss of habitat, urbanization, the increase of invasive species and climate change are some of the biggest threats to ecosystem health. Critical habitats include freshwater wetlands, tidal wetlands, low-

lying areas adjacent to tidal wetlands that offer the potential for wetland migration; riverine, ocean and estuarine shoreline habitats, including beaches, protective dunes, maritime forests and associated buffers; and streams and their corridors throughout our watersheds.

Over the years, our state and local governments have been working to ensure the protection of our tidal wetlands for habitat preservation. Through publicly identified, significant property acquisitions and through protective regulations, we have begun to slow some of the destruction of these wetlands. This is all the more urgent in an era of global climate change, especially considering the attendant sea-level rise and more frequent and devastating storms.

### Continuing New York’s Conservation Legacy

**More than a century ago**, our New York predecessors in and outside state government had the wisdom and forethought to preserve land for the future benefit of all New York citizens. Today, the return on this investment in land is far greater than could ever have been imagined 100 years ago. These lands, originally bought to protect water supplies, prevent floods, preserve habitat for wildlife and provide recreational opportunities, have become economic drivers for our rural communities and one of our greatest legacies. Summarized by the phrase, “ecosystem services,” they have fulfilled their original purpose magnificently and have been providing other benefits that we have only recently begun to understand and value, such as carbon sequestration, climate moderation, coastal and riparian area protection, habitat for rare and endangered species, groundwater recharge and filtration of significant amounts of air pollutants.

**Let's continue building on this legacy.**

#### THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The 2016 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan identifies specific actions that need be undertaken to pursue these urgent priorities:

- Promoting Outdoor Recreation
- Addressing Climate Change
- Ensuring Clean Water, Air and Land for a Healthy Public and Vibrant Economy
- Protecting, Using and Conserving Our Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage

For each objective, we identify recommended actions for reaching it. Many of the actions are already in progress. They have been identified by the public and experienced, professional staff of various conservation programs assisting us in our open space conservation efforts.

Many actions that we identify will be undertaken through the efforts of state agencies, partnerships and local governments. These civic and conservation actions can guide and inspire each of us in our own realm of influence. Little steps add up; even small changes we make in our commute, our choice

## A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

---

of home site, our use of energy, and our consumption can help make a difference for New York's future. Through personal engagement in open space conservation, there are many actions that we can undertake or initiate at every level.

# **PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION**

RECREATIONAL ACCESS FOR ALL

CONNECTING OUR CHILDREN WITH NATURE

PROVIDING URBAN WATERFRONT ACCESS, URBAN GREENWAYS and TRAILWAYS

# PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

## Recreational Access for All

### Improve Recreational Access to Public and Private Lands

New York State has an abundance of both public and private lands on which to recreate. The conservation of open spaces, parks and trails contributes significantly to a vibrant economy. Outdoor recreation is an important part of New York's economy, generating \$33.8 billion per year, supporting 305,000 jobs, and providing \$12.4 billion in wages and salaries, and \$2.8 billion in state and local tax revenue ([www.outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/recreation/economy.html](http://www.outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/recreation/economy.html)). In addition, the tourism dollars generated by parks are critical, especially to local Upstate economies. According to a 2009 independent study commissioned by Parks and Trails New York, the NYS Park System boosts the state's economy by nearly \$2 billion annually. For every dollar the state invests in the park system it gets back \$5. Additionally, the state park system creates 20,000 jobs, exclusive of state parks employees. The study also showed that about \$744 million of visitor expenditures, around 40% of total visitor spending, comes from visitors living outside the communities in which the parks are located.

Access to outdoor recreation enhances the quality of life in New York and is key to attracting companies to locate in New York. DEC and OPRHP are working to improve recreational access to public lands, and to private lands through the purchase of recreational rights in conservation easements and Public Fishing Rights easements. These efforts are important because they:

- Connect New Yorkers to the public lands they own
- Diversify the constituency for open space and environmental protection
- Interest children in the natural world
- Enhance opportunities for the public to see wildlife
- Ensure open space opportunities for urban residents and equity across the State
- Enhance community prosperity and economic development related to outdoor sports, recreation and tourism
- Build support in the communities that contain state lands by providing access and recreational opportunities

New York State has made valuable investments in recreational access for much of its history. Today and into the future, the State will enhance its investments to provide greater access close to where people live, including state lands, improve availability of information on recreational opportunities and improve the economic, social and environmental benefits of those investments. As investments are made in outdoor recreation opportunities, consideration must be made as to the potential impacts to natural resources, habitat value for wildlife and ecosystem function, and impacts detrimental to natural resources should be avoided.

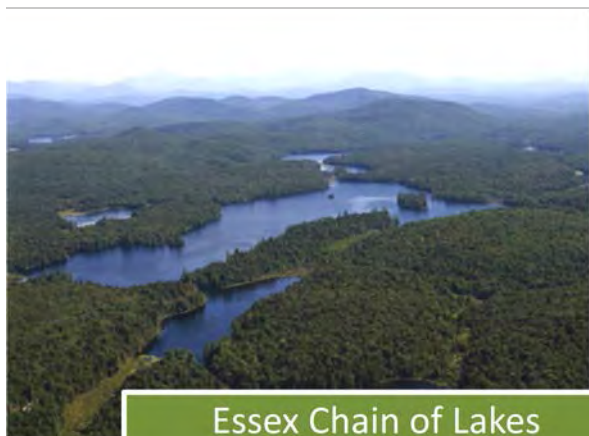


### Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

Hunting, fishing and trapping have long been part of New York’s traditional outdoor recreation activities. Because of the importance of hunting and fishing to the New York State economy, particularly in upstate New York, Governor Cuomo has established the NY is Open to Fishing and Hunting initiative with the intent to improve access to fishing and hunting in New York State. Research has shown that in addition to providing better access to information concerning fishing and hunting, lack of adequate access is the primary reason why participation in these sports is declining.

#### ACTIONS

- Focus recreational access enhancements in areas close to where people live.
- Create outdoor recreation destinations throughout the state to benefit local communities.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for a greater diversity of New Yorkers to enjoy the outdoors and outdoor recreation.
- Improve the information available on outdoor recreational opportunities, including on state agency websites and social media. Increase the availability of multi-lingual information.
- Promote and expand wildlife watching opportunities and infrastructure, such as boardwalks, bird blinds, and accessible wildlife viewing infrastructure that maximizes enjoyment of open spaces while minimizing the impacts of recreation to these important ecosystems.
- Establish a program whereby private landowners receive an incentive for providing access to their lands for fishing, hunting, hiking and skiing, and amend General Obligations Law 9-103 to preserve immunity for those landowners, even though they receive an incentive for allowing recreational use of their land.
- Work with OPRHP, municipalities and other public landowners to improve access for fishing and hunting on public lands.
- Continue to acquire public fishing rights and lands for fishing and boating access on NY waters. Priority will be given to high-quality fishery resources and those in proximity to heavily populated areas of New York State.
- Establish a dedicated funding source for maintenance and rehabilitation of boating and fishing access facilities.
- Provide outdoor recreation experiences to youngsters, such as through Sportsman Education courses and fishing clinics.
- Expand opportunities for fishing, hunting and trapping on appropriate public lands to encourage a new generation of outdoors men and women through junior mentoring programs.
- Encourage and enhance “watchable wildlife” opportunities throughout the State.
- Gather quantitative and qualitative information in partnership with SUNY-ESF about recreational use and impacts in the Forest Preserve to better inform our future planning.
- Continue to improve public access to NYC Watershed lands in partnership with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection.



Essex Chain of Lakes

## Acquisition of the Former Finch Pruyn Lands

In 2012, Governor Cuomo announced the planned acquisition of 69,000 acres of the former Finch Pruyn and other Nature Conservancy lands throughout the Adirondacks, which comprise the largest single addition to the Adirondack Forest Preserve in more than a century.

The first phase of the acquisition occurred in December 2012 and brought public access to the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River tracts with 11 interconnected lakes and ponds, providing a seven-mile canoe route and a much anticipated paddling experience within easy reach of the traveling public. In 2013, DEC closed on an additional five tracts of land totaling 9,300 acres, including ecologically significant locations such as the OK Slip Falls tract in Hamilton County, with its spectacular waterfall that hikers can enjoy for the first time in a century. In 2014, Governor Cuomo announced the acquisition of 14 parcels totaling 8,451 acres, which contain miles of rivers and streams, ponds, wildlife habitat and trails, and offer exceptional opportunities for hiking, wildlife viewing, cross country skiing and mountain biking. In 2016, the final parcel, Boreas Ponds, was acquired.

These land acquisitions complement the 2010 acquisition of 89,000 acres of conservation easements on former Finch Pruyn lands that protect working forests in communities across the North Country. These land and conservation easement acquisitions, which were supported by local communities, provide abundant opportunities for premier hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, mountain biking and cross-country skiing for a broad array of recreational users. Public access to these lands will draw visitors to population centers that rely on year-round tourism opportunities, including the completion of critical links among local communities in the Adirondack snowmobile trail system, providing four seasons of tourism opportunities and significantly benefitting local businesses.

### ENSURING ACCESSIBLE RECREATION: UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Approximately one in five Americans has a disability, and much needs to be done to enable people with disabilities to fully participate in our communities and in New York's outdoor environments. Many people with disabilities have not traditionally sought the benefits of outdoor recreation because they have been deterred by its challenges. Many have yet to discover for themselves the enjoyment and ease of access that Universal Design provides.

## PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

---

Over the last several years, there has been increased focus on providing universally accessible outdoor amenities on DEC public lands and at OPRHP facilities. The result has been the creation of wheelchair-accessible trails, designated parking, restrooms, picnic areas, campsites, fishing piers, equestrian mounting platforms, and waterway access sites, as well as increased efforts to make all programs and services inclusive. Many modified outdoor facilities keep in mind the beauty of the surrounding environment that is sought and display innovative examples of natural and site-sensitive design solutions. This invites and welcomes people of varying abilities to become active in outdoor recreation, in turn supporting a healthy quality of life for all of our citizens.

### ACTIONS

- **Ensure the availability of accessible recreation opportunities throughout the State.**
  - Complete planned projects and develop new projects to increase access for people with disabilities to state lands and recreational facilities.
  - Use appropriate DEC and OPRHP-administered lands to provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, hiking, camping, bird/nature watching/study, fishing, boating, trapping, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and picnicking for people of all abilities.
  - Initiate training and education for anglers and hunters with disabilities.
- **Formally assess trails at DEC Education Centers for appropriate designations related to accessibility standards; make improvements where possible.**
- **Complete the OPRHP Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan to identify accessibility needs and plan for addressing them.**

### Connecting our Children with Nature

The 19th century conservationists recognized the importance of nature as a refuge from the noise and bustle of city life. Today, understanding the environment is critical to our future. But the sad irony is that as the natural environment becomes more important, fewer and fewer people, especially children, are in contact with it.

Earlier generations of New Yorkers played outdoors much of the time. Today, most children spend far less time outdoors than did their parents. Kids are learning about nature indirectly, from television and the Internet, rather than directly from contact and observation. Their outdoor experience is often limited to the artificial environment of groomed lawns and playing fields.

We conserve our environment not just to protect our health and enforce the law, but to ensure that we and future generations can experience the joy of a hike or a hunt in the woods, the thrill of a swim at a clean beach, or the beauty of an unspoiled view.

Whether it is a stroll in an urban waterfront park or a paddling trip in the wilderness, these connections to nature can refresh, teach, and sustain us. While use and demand for our campgrounds, education centers, and youth camps remain high, participation in fishing, hunting and trapping has declined.

## PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

---

Meanwhile, research has documented a shift away from outdoor activities in the general population. We can reverse this trend by helping more families rediscover the natural world.

Our efforts to connect New Yorkers to nature will be conducted with the goal of providing access, increasing environmental literacy, enhancing public health and quality of life, and building the interest and involvement of the next generation of New Yorkers to carry on the traditions of caring for the environment and protecting our open spaces.

### ACTIONS

- **Continue to support partnerships that multiply efforts to inform the public about natural resource and environmental quality topics, such as those with the Student Conservation Association; AmeriCorps program; Excelsior Conservation Corps; Audubon NY; the Naturalist Intern programs at Five Rivers, Stony Kill Farm, Rogers and Reinstein Woods environmental education centers; and the friends groups at DEC centers and OPRHP nature centers and historic sites.**
  - Continue offering regularly scheduled public interpretation and outreach programs by DEC environmental educators and historic site interpreters, including special events such as fall festivals and Earth Day celebrations.
  - Enhance existing aquatic and water-related programs, such as Project WILD Aquatic and Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), by developing information specific to New York and by linking with the I FISH NY program.
  - Maintain partnership programs such as the After School Conservation Club in New York City, Buffalo, and the Capital District, the Naturalist Intern Program with the four friends groups of DEC education centers, and the AmeriCorps program with the Student Conservation Association.
  - Identify and strengthen partnerships with non-profit organizations in EJ communities that have children and environmental stewardship at the core of their mission.
- **Design improvements to DEC's Environmental Education Centers and Camps, including constructing new environmental education facilities at Five Rivers, maximizing green features and their educational value, and making improvements at summer youth camps.**
- **Continue to expand youth programs within DEC's education centers, such as offering weekly after-school outdoor discovery programs and family-friendly programs on weekends.**
  - Continue of educator workshops using standards-based, national environmental education programs, such as Project WILD, Project WET, and Project Learning Tree (PLT).
  - Continue to offer Junior Naturalist programs at campgrounds.
  - Continue DEC's After School Conservation Club by training urban area educators and youth service providers in this 10-week environmental education program that teaches elementary students about natural resources and environmental quality through fun, educational activities and stewardship projects.
  - Enhance DEC's Campership Diversity program by partnering with community-based organizations, local schools and after-school program providers. The Diversity Program

- connects urban youth, who would not have the opportunity to participate in outdoor educational or recreational experiences, to the natural environment through hands-on activities and stewardship projects. Participants then go to one of DEC's four summer camps for a free, one-week residential experience, followed by post-camp activities that offer career exploration in natural resources and environmental quality.
- Use environmental education facilities and programs to train young people in safe and ethical hunting practices.
  - Continue to provide *Conservationist for Kids* magazine to every fourth-grade public school student to provide science-based information on natural resources and environmental quality topics and to encourage children to connect with nature by getting outdoors.
  - Provide information on watching wildlife as an outdoor recreation activity, including where to go, tips for viewing, and best locations to see specific species.
  - Continue DEC's Cooperative Forestry conservation education, which focuses on providing rural, suburban and urban youth with activities such as county-level conservation field days, county fairs, and school Arbor Day and seedling programs.
  - **Promote environmental literacy and stewardship through place based (i.e. Great Lakes, Hudson River and Susquehanna River) experiential environmental education.**
    - Continue place based education efforts, aligned with state and national learning standards, such as those developed by the Hudson River Estuary Program, Great Lakes Literacy and Chesapeake Bay Literacy and encourage new efforts for additional locations around New York State.
  - **Continue and enhance I Fish NY and other outreach/education fishing programs.**
    - Continue angler education programs at water-based DEC campgrounds and selected summer youth camps.
    - Provide in-school fishing/aquatic resource training, along with fishing clinics and other programs to teach fishing skills and increase knowledge of the State's aquatic resources.
    - Continue collaborative efforts with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to increase fishing participation in New York State.

### Meeting the Open Space Needs of our Urban Communities

Demographic and societal changes will have an impact on New York State's expanding population in the decades to come. Between 2011 and 2040, New York State's overall population is expected to grow by 12.5%, from 19.6 million residents to 22 million. Within the population itself are significant structural changes, such as the continuing trend of urbanization, the growth of suburban poverty, and the continuing needs of those living below the poverty level, as well as an aging population. The senior segment (65+) of the population is forecasted to grow by 75% in the next 30 years in New York State due to an increase in life expectancy. By 2040, 1 in 5 New York State residents (20.9%) will be above the age of 65. New York is the third most populous state in the nation, with 87.5% of the population living in "urban" areas.

## PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

---

These changes will be a major factor in the need for open space and recreational facilities and will influence the types of facilities required in urban, suburban and rural areas. Planning for demographic and societal changes is important and must begin now to provide for the needs of the future.

*PlaNYC: A Greener, Greater New York, or PlaNYC* is an example of a planning document that incorporates the important benefits of green infrastructure into the management of a city ([www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/home/home.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/home/home.shtml)). It emphasizes that the supply of land is a fixed—and scarce—commodity in New York City, with a range of sustainable development issues arising from the rapidly growing population. The Plan has been largely implemented to protect and improve the environment and quality of life in the five boroughs. The actions described in *PlaNYC* are and can be undertaken in the all urban areas of the state, including but not limited to Syracuse, Buffalo, the Capital District, Rochester, Binghamton, Utica, and Rome.

### **Urban Waters and Waterfront Access Recreation**

New York's lengthy, diverse shorelines have nurtured marine, riverine and lake-based industries for centuries. The harvest of aquatic resources, recreational use of the waters, and commercial sightseeing and tourist boats have made significant contributions to the culture and economy of these areas. However, the high real estate values accorded waterfront property threatens to displace commercial and public access to the waterfront. Waterfront access in minority or low-income communities is especially critical because waterfronts in these communities are often industrialized, classified as brownfields, or gated, all of which prohibit access.

Providing New Yorkers with access to waterfronts should be done in an environmentally friendly manner. State coastal and waterway policies and regulations ensure the perpetuation of their multiple resource values. An example of regulatory protection is under 6NYCRR Part 608, "Use and Protection of Waters," which considers environmental impacts, safe recreational and commercial use of water resources, and natural resource management objectives in the review of development permits. Some examples from New York State's Coastal Management Plan include Coastal Policy #9, "Expand recreational use of fish and wildlife resources in coastal areas by increasing access to existing resources, supplementing existing stocks, and developing new resources" and Coastal Policy #21, "Water-dependent and water-enhanced recreation will be encouraged and facilitated, and will be given priority over non-water-related uses along the coast."

Fishing and boating are well-established means of providing outstanding opportunities for citizens to get back in touch with the natural world. Given the fact that public access to New York waters is not guaranteed and the availability of waterfront property for public access projects is limited, we must focus on developing new public access to waters in areas that are currently private, improving access on waterfront lands the State currently owns, and modernizing existing public access sites. In addition to ramps and hand-launching facilities for boats, efforts should be undertaken to provide fishing piers and other improved shorefishing opportunities for people without boats. Waterway access must

## PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

---

incorporate universal design principles to recreation structures such as fishing piers, so that these shoreline improvements are accessible to all citizens.

### **New York's System of Urban Greenways and Trailways**

Our trailways and greenways provide recreation routes and linear parks, which connect open space and natural resource areas. These green corridors conserve irreplaceable scenic and cultural resources and accommodate a variety of trail uses, water-oriented recreation, and other forms of recreation. A recreation corridor functions as a recreational facility in itself, providing access among recreation destination points and opportunities to enjoy scenic and natural open spaces, shorelines, and highland areas, and chances to see wildlife that benefit from these corridors. A greenway designation provides a more regional approach to land-use planning, tourism and recreational trail development, which relies on local interest, participation and various collaborative initiatives.

### **Connecting our Urban Parks**

Linear parks and greenways serve an important function in connecting residential areas to larger urban parks and to small neighborhood parks, both of which are highly used and valued in our densely populated urban areas. Continuing efforts to reclaim or “repurpose” state land, and federal land once used by the military, and also to rezone former industrial areas along the waterfront, have created a rare opportunity to design and build large, new, public spaces. For example, the redevelopment of Governors Island and large sections of the Brooklyn waterfront in Red Hook and Sunset Park have featured significant open space components. As redevelopment of these sites goes forward, it is important to monitor implementation of the commitments to provide public amenities, such as open space and recreational areas.

### **Intergovernmental Land Transfers**

Although the acquisition of privately owned lands for the purpose of open space conservation remains critical, many properties already publicly owned by federal, state, and city agencies could be formally and permanently “repurposed” for recreational use. The relatively high cost of land in several areas of the State makes this kind of land transfer from public agencies an especially important mechanism for open space conservation and often entails little or no cost. Such transfers should be undertaken with care to overcome potential obstacles, such as: possible rights of reversion, environmental remediation problems, removal of derelict structures, or public safety and security concerns.

## **ACTIONS**

- **Ensure availability of resources for environmental remediation of open space properties and public access to recreation, especially for waterfront access.**
- **Request local transit systems to add needed routes to reach local open space resources.**
- **Enhance the connections among park lands, places of work and residential neighborhoods.**

# ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE



PROTECTING OUR COASTLINES



ESTABLISHING RIPARIAN BUFFERS AND WETLAND PROTECTIONS



MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY



PROMOTING URBAN FORESTRY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



# ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

## TAKING ACTION to PROTECT COMMUNITIES and PRIVATE PROPERTY

On November 15, 2012, Governor Andrew Cuomo convened the NYS2100 Commission (Commission) in response to the recent, and unprecedented, severe weather events experienced by New York State and the surrounding region—most recently, Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee. The Governor asked the Commission to examine and evaluate key vulnerabilities in the state’s critical infrastructure systems, and to recommend actions that should be taken to strengthen and improve the resilience of those systems. If done right, we have a tremendous opportunity to mitigate future damage and subsequent economic losses, to invigorate New York’s economy with a robust green technology sector and to enhance the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

The next century will be defined by the extent to which our communities are resilient to the direct and indirect impacts of a rapidly changing climate and other long-term accelerators of change. We will never be able to predict or prevent all extreme events. But we must not waste the lessons learned and opportunities afforded by these recent storms to chart a course for the State that truly prepares our communities for future eventualities. Planning for a more resilient tomorrow enables the State and its residents to take cost-effective actions and to make investments that will benefit our communities today and far into the future.

The Commission consisted of a diverse group of experts from academia, business, the not-for-profit community, engineering, finance, real estate, the federal government and the people of New York, who recommended investments to enhance the state’s resilience to 21st century hazards and to support a thriving economy throughout the coming decades.

The challenges facing the State are not to be underestimated. There are significant climate change risks, including sea-level rise, changing patterns of precipitation, temperature change and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. There are demographic pressures, with significant population growth predicted for New York State, and structural changes within the population, including further urbanization, the growth of suburban poverty, the continuing needs of those living below the poverty level and a growing aging population.

We will never be able to perfectly predict or prevent all extreme events or eventualities. Therefore, we must conserve and develop those systems that can most quickly respond to, and most effectively rebound from, severe weather events and other emergencies. Building resilience will enable us to avoid unmanageable impacts, while managing the risks that the future will no doubt present. Our capacity to deal with known risks, while establishing countermeasures to contend with unknowns, will be critical in this century.

The Commission reviewed the vulnerabilities faced by the state’s infrastructure systems and developed specific recommendations that can be implemented to increase New York’s resilience in five main areas: transportation, energy, land use, insurance, and infrastructure finance. These recommendations are designed to:

- Identify immediate actions that should be taken to mitigate or strengthen existing infrastructure systems—some of which suffered damage in the recent storms—to improve normal functioning and to withstand extreme weather more effectively in the future;
- Identify infrastructure projects that would, if realized over a longer term, help to bring not only greater climate resilience but also other significant economic and quality-of-life benefits to New York State’s communities;
- Assess long-term options for the use of “hard” barriers and natural systems to protect coastal communities;
- Create opportunities to integrate resilience planning, protection and development approaches into New York’s economic development decisions and strategies; and
- Shape reforms in the area of investment, insurance and risk management related to natural disasters and other emergencies.

In addition to numerous recommendations related to specific infrastructure systems, the Commission identified nine crosscutting recommendations to improve New York State’s overall resilience. They include steps to improve the state’s built (hard) and natural (soft) infrastructure, institutions, and information systems. Based on a broad resilience framework, these recommendations aim to improve the daily functioning of critical systems and enhance the efficiency of normal operations, doubling the benefit of the recommended investments.

**Crosscutting Recommendations** All resilient systems share and demonstrate certain core characteristics in good times and in times of stress. Many of these recommendations are relevant to multiple sectors, create improvements across systems, and enhance these essential resilience characteristics:

- Protect, upgrade, and strengthen existing systems;
- Rebuild smarter—ensure replacement with better options and alternatives;
- Encourage the use of green and natural infrastructure;
- Create shared equipment and resource reserves;
- Promote integrated planning and develop criteria for integrated decision-making for capital investments;
- Enhance institutional coordination;
- Improve data, mapping, visualization, and communication systems;
- Create new incentive programs to encourage resilient behaviors and reduce vulnerabilities; and,
- Expand education, job training and workforce development opportunities.

### Land-Use Recommendations

**Protect coastal and Great Lakes communities** – Our coastlines, among our most vulnerable assets, are home to a vast majority of the state’s population. Because of the significant risk of coastal problems

resulting from climate change, this category of recommendations focuses specifically on immediate actions to restore and mitigate coastal infrastructure to protect communities and on strategies for using natural as well as engineered measures to improve resilience.

- Restore dunes, beaches, and barrier islands;
- Repair hard infrastructure along the coast;
- Repair and protect wastewater infrastructure;
- Repair important public recreational areas;
- Dredge inlets, and address beach breaches on Long Island and the Great Lakes;
- Restore coastal wetlands;
- Develop a resilience strategy for the Hudson River Estuary, New York Harbor, Great Lakes and Long Island Sound coastal regions; and,
- Develop a comprehensive resilience strategy, including a restoration plan and storm surge barrier assessment for New York Harbor.

**Reduce inland vulnerability to extreme weather events** Climate change poses a risk to coastal communities and to the inland communities of New York State. An increase in extreme weather can damage buildings and infrastructure, cripple economies, and create public health hazards. This category of recommendations identifies measures to manage the effects of freshwater flooding and drought and reduce their impact.

- Protect and restore statewide freshwater wetlands;
- Expand wetlands protection in flood-prone areas;
- Create a wetlands and natural systems mitigation banking program to offset damage or loss;
- Protect minor streams across the state;
- Expand green infrastructure and urban forests;
- Manage at-risk drinking water supplies;
- Strengthen dams and levees to protect the public from inland flooding; and,
- Protect and secure petroleum, chemical, and hazardous waste tanks located on waterways.

**Develop probabilistic hazards mapping and risk mapping** Superstorm Sandy exposed major weaknesses in our capacity to predict flood events and determine affected areas. Identifying risks is critical to preparing for and reacting to weather events and other disasters. This category of recommendations identifies problems and solutions for current methods of hazard and risk assessment.

- Invest in stream flow gauge, rain gauge and groundwater monitoring.

**Strengthen land-use programs, standards, policies, guidelines, and procedures** To fully prepare for the effects of climate change, we must encourage sound uses of land to minimize vulnerabilities and preserve communities. These categories of recommendations outline how New York can use programs, incentives, policies, and procedures to shape better land-use and building practices.

- Develop regional resilience strategies.
- Update the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to incorporate resilience.

## ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

---

- Establish new land-use policies to account for climate change effects.

These natural resource-based programs are usually far less expensive than “engineered” solutions that often shift the negative impacts downstream or to adjacent property owners, as well as neither being sustainable for the long term nor protective of natural resources. While resource-based programs are usually more economical and a worthy investment, they require a commitment of resources at the state and local levels for implementation.

While it will be challenging for New York's communities to address climate change, acting now can avoid huge losses to private property and community resources later. Sensible land-use regulations and incentive programs can help protect private property, save communities money and conserve valuable wildlife habitat and create recreational opportunities.

Several state agencies are working together to enhance the technical and financial assistance available to local governments to prepare communities for climate change.

The New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program has been established to provide additional rebuilding and revitalization assistance to communities severely damaged by Hurricanes Sandy and Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. To facilitate community redevelopment planning and the resilience of communities, the State has established the New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program and has allocated \$25 million for planning in the most affected communities. The program will assist 102 severely damaged New York Rising communities in developing comprehensive and innovative rebuilding plans. The plans will be driven by the needs of each community and developed by regional planning committees of community leaders, experts, and officials. Later allocations of funds will be used to support the implementation of projects and activities identified in the plans that targeted communities will produce.

***Community Risk and Resiliency Act.*** The Community Risk and Resiliency Act (CRRA) was enacted in 2014 to ensure that certain state monies, facility-siting regulations and permits include consideration of the effects of climate risk and extreme-weather events. Among CRRA's several provisions is an amendment of ECL §49-0203, State Land Acquisition Policy, to require that DEC and OPRHP consider future climate risk due to sea-level rise, storm surge and flooding in the open space acquisition program. Additionally, state agencies are developing guidance on the use of natural resiliency measures within the regulatory programs specified in CRRA to address the effects of climate change such as flooding and storm surge.

### OUR CHANGING CLIMATE

Scientists have documented changes in the climate of the Northeast that correlate with changes in temperature across the globe. The best current information on our area's climate change is found in two reports. *ClimAID: the Integrated Assessment for Effective Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in New York State* ([www.nyscrda.ny.gov/climaid](http://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/climaid)) was undertaken to provide decision-makers with

cutting-edge information on the state's vulnerability to climate change and to facilitate the development of adaptation strategies informed by both local experience and scientific knowledge. This state-level assessment of climate change impacts is specifically geared to assist in the development of adaptation strategies. It acknowledges the need to plan for and adapt to climate change impacts in a range of sectors: Water Resources, Coastal Zones, Ecosystems, Agriculture, Energy, Transportation, Telecommunications, and Public Health.

The second report, *Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change – Metro East Coast* ([www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/nacc/metro.htm](http://www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/nacc/metro.htm)) is one section of a national study carried out by the U.S. Global Change Research Program. It outlines the potential effects of climate change on resources and infrastructure in southeastern New York, including Long Island, northeastern New Jersey, and western Connecticut.

*Rising Temperatures.* The average annual temperature in the Northeast has risen 1.8 degrees F over the last 100 years. Winter temperatures have risen even faster, as much as 4.4 degrees in the last 30 years. New Yorkers can expect an increase in average temperature ranging from 4 to 10°F by 2100, primarily in the form of warmer winters.

*Heat Waves and Cold Events.* The total number of hot days in New York State is expected to increase as this century progresses. The frequency and duration of heat waves, defined as three or more consecutive days with maximum temperatures at or above 90°F, are also expected to increase. In contrast, extreme cold events defined both as the number of days per year with minimum temperature at or below 32°F and those at or below 0°F are expected to decrease.

*More Heavy Rains and Stronger Storms.* While average annual precipitation is expected to increase only slightly, precipitation more often will be heavy enough to cause local flooding. Paradoxically, studies also suggest that short-term droughts (1–3 months) will be more frequent, as dry spells between heavy rains grow longer and hotter.

*More Hurricanes and Tropical Storms.* When water vapor in the atmosphere condenses, energy is released and becomes added fuel for hurricanes and tropical storms. Because warmer water evaporates faster from the ocean surface, there is more condensing vapor available to energize the storms that arise over the open ocean. The number of strong storms in the Northeast has shown relatively little change yet, but warmer water temperatures are expected to feed stronger storms in the coming decades. In the near term, climatologists expect that even if the frequency of storms does not increase, the proportion of storms that become severe is likely to be greater.

*Shorter Winters and Longer Growing Seasons.* Data from the last 30 years indicate that much of the Northeast already has seen a change in the winter snow season. In the Adirondacks, total annual snowfall has decreased by 40 to 60 inches (more winter precipitation now falls as rain). During the same time, the period with snow on the ground has decreased by as much as 20 days in some parts of

## ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

the State. By the end of the century, parts of New York could see only 5 to 10 days of snow cover during the winter season.

*Change in Winter Freeze and Thaw Dates.* In the Great Lakes region, later ice-in dates appear to be increasing the frequency of "lake-effect" storms, very heavy snowfalls that occur when open water in the lakes is warmer than the surrounding land surface. If the lakes freeze over later in winter (or not at all), more lake-effect events are expected. Reduced ice cover can also increase winter wind and wave erosion of shorelines.

*Timing of Spring Bloom.* Plants bloom in response to temperature, sunshine, rainfall and humidity, all factors that determine climate. Spring bloom dates in the Northeast are now, on average, 4 to 8 days earlier than in the 1960s. Across New York, the last frost is now 8 days earlier than in the 1970s. By the end of the century, New York's growing season is projected to be 4 to 6 weeks longer.

*Sea-Level Rise.* Sea-level rise along New York's tidal coast has averaged about one inch per decade since 1850. The rate of rise is expected to increase with global warming. The Community Risk and Resiliency Act requires DEC to adopt science-based sea-level projections through a rulemaking. DEC has proposed adoption of a new 6 NYCRR Part 490, Projected Sea-level Rise. Part 490's projections are based on the NYSERDA-funded ClimAID project. Part 490 includes high projections of up to 75 inches by 2100, based on rates of sea-level rise anticipated if melt of land-based ice on Greenland and Antarctica accelerates. By mid-century, a medium projection, considered about as likely or not, puts New York sea-level rise at 14 to 16 inches, and at 25 to 29 inches by the 2080s. Medium projections by 2100 are 32 to 36 inches.

Climate Change Projections			
Climate Change Risk	2020s	2050s	2080s
Sea-Level Rise		14-16 inches	25-29 inches
Change in precipitation	0-5% increase	0-10% increase	5-15% increase
Change in temperature	1.5-3.0°F	3.0-5.5°F	4.0-9.0°F
<small>(6 NYCRR Part 490, Projected Sea-level Rise; 2100 Commission Report)</small>			

### EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Shorter, warmer winters and longer growing seasons will affect the types of species that survive in our region, both on the ground and in the water. As temperatures rise, some plants and animals will move north or to higher elevations to find cooler conditions. In particular, New York's fisheries could undergo significant change. Today, New York's marine waters are home to a seasonal mix of cold and warm-temperate species, and our inland fresh waters support thriving populations of cold water fish like trout and salmon. In both marine and freshwater fisheries, warming waters may tilt the balance toward warm water species, diminishing the state's biodiversity.

Climate change can affect traditional New York plants, such as sugar maple trees. The maple syrup season is dependent on the freeze/thaw cycle that has typically occurred in March but has been changing in recent decades, generally to earlier in the year. A recent study by the National Audubon Society found that nearly half of North America’s birds are at risk from climate change if their habitats are not conserved. Increased local flooding will expand floodplain areas and increase the number of high-velocity flows. Unchecked development in frequently inundated areas will increase the cost of replacement or relocation and the loss of natural flood absorption.

Rising sea waters may move the Hudson River salt wedge further upstream, making it harder for communities that get their water from the lower Hudson River to meet the high demand for water that accompanies development. Rising seas also could affect other coastal areas of New York and inundate tidal marshes and sensitive shallow habitats that support many species of fish and wildlife. While these critical aquatic habitats naturally migrate inland with rising water, infrastructure such as railbeds and roads and attempts to buttress shorelines against rising seas will prevent lost habitat from replacing itself.

### PROTECTING AND CONNECTING RESILIENT STRONGHOLDS

As worsening storms, expanding droughts and rising temperatures threaten to destabilize many natural areas in New York State, scientific evidence shows that certain naturally resilient landscapes will be robust enough to continue providing habitat to variety of plants and animals while also serving as essential resources for community food and water (Anderson et al. 2014). These aptly named “strongholds of natural resilience” are characterized by traits such as “complexity “(containing a diversity of landforms and topography that foster and maintain microclimates) and “permeability” (affording fauna and flora the opportunity to move across the landscapes unobstructed by roads, dams, fragmentation or other barriers). The most complex and permeable landscapes offer the greatest potential to withstand climate impacts and maintain healthy natural systems.

According to the developing science 41 percent of New York landscapes have characteristics that make them highly resilient (Anderson et al. 2014). The state and its conservation community have done a good job protecting many of those, most notably in the Adirondacks, Catskills and Hudson Highlands. Indeed, a full 81 percent of our already protected lands are above average for resilience. However, there has been less success in protecting resilient sites at low elevations and on geophysical settings such as fertile limestone and silt or coarse sandy coastal soils that are critical to providing strongholds for the full spectrum of biodiversity within New York. Sophisticated mapping has identified these sites that need more attention in a separate analysis that can be used to balance our protection portfolio. These low-elevation, fertile sites are critical to providing connections among existing protected lands, and more broadly for protecting linkages up and down the eastern seaboard.

As part of a comprehensive program for addressing climate change, a focused effort should be made to protect naturally resilient strongholds across the wide range of geophysical settings found in New York, and secure connections among them, in order to facilitate adaption for the greatest number of

species and increase nature's chances of providing the spectrum of ecosystem services that we rely upon. These natural strongholds must be shielded from damaging development, pollution, and other negative actions or they could lose their ability to shield nature from climate impacts. In some instances, landscapes with the inherent potential to be resilient to climate change, due to their underlying complexity and their permeability, might currently be in degraded condition due to non-climate threats, like pollution, overuse and invasive species. Work is needed to restore the condition in those places, perhaps even on already protected lands, in keeping with the section that follows later in this Plan, Stewarding Our Open Spaces. Also, there is a need to protect, restore and enhance connections among these strongholds all across the state.

### Protecting Our Coastlines

New York's coastlines are the third longest in the nation, with over 15.6 million people—81% of our state's population—living and working in marine coastal counties. The state's coastlines include the Atlantic Ocean, Long Island Sound and the Great Lakes, and they account for 12% of the state's land mass. By 2020, an estimated 785,000 additional people will join the current residents and workers in marine coastal counties.

An example of the importance of our coastlines is the severe weather event that destroyed thousands of homes and businesses on Long Island; financial losses are estimated to be in the billions. After Superstorm Sandy hit, some south shore neighborhoods remain uninhabitable. There have been calls for expensive, engineered solutions to flooding and coastal erosion to protect against loss of property and life. However, many people are coming to believe that the wiser, more sustainable approach is to strategically retreat from the shore and return coastal land to its natural condition so it can provide the buffering, filtering and protective functions nature intended. Returning shorelines and floodplains to their natural condition will increase the land's ability to withstand coastal flooding and remove people and property from harm's way, reducing the need for costly cleanups and repairs, emergency response, and personal injury and death. The lessons of this example and many others are applicable to all of New York's coastlines.

New York's coastal and estuarine lands provide a great diversity of fish and wildlife habitats, bluffs, barrier islands, and other natural protective features. Enormous economic benefits are derived from the coast each year. New York's commercial fishing industry, ports and marinas, and coastal farming areas contribute billions of dollars annually to the state's economy.

Global sea levels continue to rise steadily due to melting of the polar glaciers and ocean expansion due to warming. By 2100, experts project sea level to rise in New York City and Long Island by as much as six feet under certain scenarios. Rising sea levels will have major consequences for New York's coastal communities, including but not limited to:

- Dangerous storm surges caused by high winds and tides, which increase the risk of flooding, beach erosion, and damage to infrastructure in low-lying areas;



## ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

---

- Increased areas of coastal inundation during regular tidal cycles;
- Regular inundation of coastal wastewater infrastructure and the direct transmission of pathogen and nitrogen pollution to ground and surface waters;
- Increased salinity of the drinking water supply in communities along the Hudson and possibly in shoreline communities on Long Island due to saltwater intrusion.

### ACTIONS

- **Gather data on baseline condition of habitats and species, population trends, and projections of impacts from climate change, especially in coastal and riparian areas, to assess potential impacts, draft protective and adaptive strategies, monitor impacts, and mitigate expected impacts (DEC and partners).**
  - Integrate sea-level rise and other climate considerations into the DEC–Environmental Facilities Corporation assessment of water infrastructure needs and criteria for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds (DEC, EFC).
- **Implement the recommendations of the NYS 2100 Commission to protect our coastline and adapt to rising sea level. (DEC, other state agencies, municipal governments and appropriate federal agencies)**
- **Implement the Community Risk and Resiliency Act.**
- **Use the best available science to implement measures that will protect our coastlines and watersheds and make them more resilient to climate change impacts.**
- **Incorporate vulnerability to sea-level rise and enhanced storm surge and protection of critical habitats into land acquisition and conservation programs.**
- **Integrate the state residential buyout program with municipal Community Reconstruction Zone plans and City of New York planning activities. New York, in its action plan for Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery programs, has articulated key principles, including building back better and smarter and pursuing a state-led, community-driven recovery. The Recreate New York Home Buyout program is an important element of the state plan for resilient recovery, as it will remove homes from high-risk areas and will establish new natural infrastructure. The program includes targeted buyout areas and incentives for group buyouts, which will promote establishment of relatively large, new coastal ecosystems that will enhance habitat and provide buffer areas for protection of coastal communities.**
- **Maintain and restore healthy ecosystems along the coast and within coastal watersheds so they are more resilient to climate change impacts. This would include: restoring and maintaining natural**

### JAMAICA BAY

Jamaica Bay has seen a steady decline in the size of its marsh islands since 1974, when these tidal wetlands gained regulatory protections through the state’s Tidal Wetlands Act (ECL Article 25). DEC’s Jamaica Bay Task Force has been working in collaboration with the National Park Service and National Gateway Recreation Area, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection and its partners in guiding restoration of the marsh islands to 1974 acreage, including research into the causes of marsh loss and restoration efforts.

- buffers around waterbodies to reduce the impacts of runoff and enhance species habitats and migratory abilities; creating and restoring aquatic and terrestrial habitat and ecosystem connections; and monitoring and responding quickly to invasive species infestations.
- **Work in partnership with the Gateway National Recreation Area to assist in the implementation of the general management plan for resource preservation and visitor use within Jamaica Bay.**
    - Develop and implement short-term management, restoration and research priorities for tidal wetlands, as identified and developed in Jamaica Bay by the Jamaica Bay Task Force, Science and Resiliency Institute at Jamaica Bay, National Park Service, the Army Corp, NYC Parks, NYC DEP, DEC, and multiple academic partners.
  - **Support communication and collaboration among all partners, including estuary, watershed, and managed area programs, so that priority ecosystem restoration, conservation and green infrastructure projects are considered for inclusion in plans throughout our coastal zones, including but not limited to the Community Reconstruction Zone plans that will be developed by municipalities and supported through Community Development Block Grants.**
  - **Facilitate the development and application of hybrid engineering approaches that link “soft” ecosystem-based approaches (green) with “hard” infrastructure (grey) to provide holistic solutions to enhance resiliency. This effort will build on the “living shoreline” concept and identify combinations of natural ecosystems and built infrastructure that best protect coastal communities and shorelines.**
  - **Evaluate the effectiveness and benefits of including green infrastructure, such as dunes, wetlands, barrier islands and reefs, in engineered coastal adaptation solutions through reduction of storm surge or wave attenuation.**
  - **Implement smart-growth plans for communities that minimize impervious surfaces and maintain natural connections.**
  - **Incorporate resilience analysis into conservation planning and targeting.**
  - **Ensure accessibility of resilience data for private organizations and New York State agencies**
    - Support state agencies, local governments, land trusts and others in integrating resilience into local and regional community and conservation planning.
  - **Increase protection of resilient sites for species and communities that rely on at-risk low elevation, fertile lands.**
    - Evaluate New York’s existing conservation lands to identify gaps that need to be filled to ensure conservation of the full range of habitats to support the State’s biodiversity.
    - Develop conservation goals to balance New York’s conservation portfolio with resilient examples of low elevation, fertile sites.
    - Integrate resilience into farmland conservation priorities.
    - Identify thresholds for resilience for low elevation fertile sites to set effective goals for conservation in these challenging landscapes.

## Establishing Riparian Buffers and Wetland Protections

### RIPARIAN BUFFERS

Riparian (streamside) zones are biologically diverse vegetated ecosystems that often provide critical habitat for wildlife species and also perform many important ecological functions, including temperature regulation, flood control, and streambank stabilization. Riparian zones are critical to maintaining healthy streams and waters, and their conservation is a major element of any holistic watershed program. They are often severely damaged during the land development process, leading to unintended negative impacts to our streams and rivers. Vegetated buffers help to reduce pollution entering waterways by slowing down and filtering runoff, thus extending retention time and improving water quality. Buffers also help to reduce flooding and erosion by stabilizing shorelines and absorbing high-velocity flows. In addition, they serve an important role for wildlife as a shoreline transition zone and travel corridor.

#### Trees for Tribs

##### A Program of the Saratoga Tree Nursery

Trees for Tribs works to reforest New York's streams using local volunteers to improve water quality, wildlife habitat and storm resiliency.

Since 2007, Trees for Tribs has planted 66,000 trees and shrubs in 470 sites across the state. In 2016, the program is slated to plant more than 30,000 plants, making it the largest year for this program to date. All trees and shrubs are provided to program participants free of charge and includes tree shelters and weed mats to ensure successful establishment of riparian buffers.

New York has approximately 86,000 miles of streams, but the bed and banks of only 40% of these are afforded regulatory protections. DEC regulates excavation and fill below mean high water in some of these streams but only if the stream is navigable. While exact numbers of unregulated streams are difficult to determine, it is clear that many streams in NY do not have adequate protections.

Under Governor Andrew Cuomo's leadership, funding has been provided for restoration planting in the 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 state budgets. DEC will use this funding support New York State's Trees for Tribs (tribs as in tributaries) program, modeled after the successful Hudson Estuary Trees for Tribs program, which engages volunteers in restoring thousands of feet of streamside buffer through tree planting using native bare-root stock from the Saratoga State Tree Nursery. The program provides land owners and local governments with low-cost or no-cost native planting materials and free technical assistance. Coordinating with local, state and federal agencies, Trees for Tribs focuses on comprehensive watershed restoration designed to protect the Green Infrastructure, the first line of defense against storm and flooding events, as well as property, water quality, fish and wildlife. Trees for Tribs promotes best management practices for communities and encourage new programs, policies and investments in tributary protection.

Maintaining riparian buffers in the face of climate change, especially in the most critical areas prone to

flooding and development pressure will help protect human life and health and enable streams to move naturally. Modeling “future conditions floodplains” may be needed to accommodate the new hydrology likely to occur with more intense storm events.

The most detailed information on riparian buffer widths in New York comes not from laws or regulations but from guidance and voluntary programs encouraging best management practices (BMPs) in agriculture and timber harvesting.

While the ecological value of maintaining buffer zones is well understood and accepted, considerable debate exists over appropriate buffer zone width. Most regulatory buffer widths were designed for maintaining water quality and may not be adequate to protect fish and wildlife according to most of the research. The best approach is to integrate goals for protection and restoration with site characteristics such as slope, soil characteristics, vegetation, land use, stream size, and nearby wildlife resources, and analyze buffer width on a site-by-site basis.

### WETLANDS

Although wetlands and their shores, banks, and edges are sometimes included in the definition of riparian zones, wetlands are more often treated independently of riparian zones in the literature and in state and federal regulations. In general, wetlands are areas characterized by hydric soils that are inundated or saturated for part of the growing season and dominated by specific wetland plants. They are known by many names, such as marshes, swamps, bogs, and wet meadows. Wetlands are invaluable to the people and environment of our State, performing many crucial functions and providing multiple benefits.

For many years, the value of wetlands was not recognized, and, consequently, we have lost almost half of our wetlands to activities such as filling and draining, although in parts of the State, we are regaining wetlands due to abandonment of marginal agricultural lands that were the result of inadequate or unsustainable drainage of prior wetlands.

Wetlands have an important role in the cycle of water within a watershed. They often serve as groundwater discharge sites to maintain base flow in streams and rivers and to support ponds and lakes. In some places, wetlands are needed to recharge groundwater supplies. They help control erosion by slowing water velocity and filtering sediments, protecting reservoirs and navigational channels. They cleanse water by filtering out natural and many human-made pollutants, which are then broken down or immobilized. In wetlands, organic materials are also broken down and recycled back into the environment, where they support the food chain.

Wetlands are one of the most productive habitats for fish and wildlife, including many rare and endangered species, and they provide areas for recreation, education and research. They are also valuable open space, especially in developing areas where they may be the only remaining natural green space.

### ACTIONS

- **Establish and enhance riparian buffers and wetland protections to mitigate the effects of greater intensity rain events likely to become more frequent with climate change and to protect and improve water quality.**
  - Provide increased protection of freshwater and tidal wetlands through the state's wetland laws by increasing penalties for violations, updating existing wetlands maps, and expanding the reach of wetlands laws to include smaller wetlands.
  - Expand protection of aquatic habitat by regulating activities in and near more New York streams.
  - Enhance protection of streams and rivers and their floodplains or riparian areas by identifying appropriate river segments and, where appropriate, incorporating them into the state's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers program.
  - Complete comprehensive trends analyses of wetlands in New York State to track acreage losses and gains of various wetland types.
  - Provide technical assistance and model ordinances that can be implemented during the next five years by municipal governments to expand vegetative buffer requirements and limit inappropriate development along river and stream corridors, wetlands, floodplains and riparian areas. The program will focus on providing the tools to local governments to address this critical need, to protect private property and community resources in this era of increased storm intensity and flooding. By acting now, workable, community-based solutions can be developed that avoid the need for top-down, state-driven regulations. (DOS and DEC)
  - Develop a long-term statewide program to prioritize high-risk floodplain areas for conservation through acquisition and easement. Include plans to facilitate tidal wetland migration in response to sea-level rise.
  - Identify properties in danger of flood impacts and provide technical assistance to municipalities to establish zoning laws to ensure that only appropriate development occurs around identified floodplain areas. (DEC and DOS)
  - Assist communities in modeling "future conditions floodplains" to accommodate the new hydrology likely to occur with more intense storm events due to climate change.
  - Provide targeted training to stream professionals and contractors on in-stream project practices, and to members of the public and local governments on stream dynamics, and methods and tools for responding to flood emergencies and post-flood problems in watersheds.
  - Vigorously enforce stream and wetland protection laws and provide authority for injunctive relief.
  - Continue to support state and local government and non-profit acquisition of priority projects that protect wetlands and riparian areas identified by Regional Open Space Advisory Committees.
- **Promote sustainable forestry practices as a preferred land use over development adjacent to riparian areas and wetlands.**

- **Provide technical assistance to local governments.**
  - Provide assistance to communities to develop and implement comprehensive plans, local open space, biodiversity and watershed protection programs, and develop Community Preservation Acts. (DEC and DOS)
  - Encourage communities to sign the Climate Smart Communities Pledge and provide assistance for implementation.
  - Build upon the successful natural resource-based outreach and technical assistance activities of the Hudson River Estuary Program. (DEC)

### Mitigation and Adaptation through Sustainable Forestry Management

Forests play a large role in mitigating the effects of climate change. Growing forests naturally store carbon. The age and vigor of forest vegetation affects the rate of carbon sequestration in a forest ecosystem and the overall inventory of stored carbon. Trees are about 50 percent carbon and represent the most dynamic component of the forest ecosystem carbon pool. In the northern United States, hardwoods account for a greater proportion of carbon than softwoods. Changes in carbon inventory are affected by the rate of forest growth, harvest activity, and losses of forest cover due to conversion to other land uses, as well as fire or other natural disturbances. In general, forest activities such as tree planting increase carbon sequestration, while activities such as prescribed burning release carbon into the atmosphere. The carbon inventory in northern U.S. forests is higher than in forests in any other region of the country. An underlying factor is that forests in the North are not harvested as heavily compared to forests in the South and West.

**NEW YORK'S PRIVATE FORESTS**  
More than 63% of New York State is forest land, which amounts to 19 million acres of land covered by trees. Approximately 14.4 million acres or 76% of these acres are privately owned.

Additional carbon is stored in wood that is processed or manufactured into products. Increasing carbon stored in urban and rural trees and forests is usually an inexpensive way to mitigate increasing atmospheric greenhouse gases. The carbon stored in forests and forest products mitigates the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere, which may help delay global climate change.

Forests also act as climate buffers, moderating temperature extremes and creating local microclimates. Trees cool the air both by direct shade and by evaporative cooling through their leaves. The urban heat island effect is caused by the predominance of heat-absorbing pavement and dark surfaces which can increase a city's temperatures by several degrees. Trees can reduce this buildup of urban heat and substantially reduce energy demands and related greenhouse gas emissions.

The climate change pattern that seems to be developing in New York has fewer but heavier rains with increased runoff and more periods of summer drought. The ability of forests to soak up water is critical for reducing flooding and for absorbing adequate amounts of groundwater. Forests can also help

buffer the impacts of drought by protecting soils from desiccation and erosion. During storms, forests and wetlands can be important physical buffers, slowing the force of wind by friction and as windbreaks.

Large tracts of unbroken forests and connectivity among these forests are extremely important in the face of a changing climate. In the future, as plant and animal populations and biotic communities respond to rising temperatures, species range expansions and contractions are expected. Habitat connectivity is important for making those range adjustments.

### CARBON SEQUESTRATION

Scientists are continuing to study ways of pulling carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it long-term elsewhere to slow the increase of carbon dioxide, which is trapping heat in the Earth's atmosphere and causing temperatures to rise across the globe. This process is called carbon sequestration.

Trees, like other green plants, use photosynthesis to convert carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into sugar, cellulose and other carbon-containing carbohydrates that they use for food and growth. Trees are unique in their ability to store large amounts of carbon in their wood and continue to add carbon as they grow. Although forests release some CO<sub>2</sub> from natural processes such as decay and respiration, a healthy forest typically stores carbon at a much greater rate than it releases it.

The actual rate of carbon sequestration varies with species, age, climate and site. Some studies find that younger and faster growing forests have higher sequestration rates, while others find that older trees play a significant part in a forest's carbon sequestration capacity. Considering that one-half of the weight of dried wood is carbon, trees in a forest hold a lot of carbon. When the enormous amount of carbon stored in forest soils is added to the trees' carbon, the inescapable conclusion is that forests are one of our major carbon storage reservoirs working for us today.

Although forests alone can't sequester all of the excess carbon added by burning fossil fuels, they clearly play a significant role. In the California cap and trade system, forest management has been established as a carbon offset category. The protocol for this offset provides a methodology for monitoring carbon sequestration and for a degree of permanence of that sequestration for a period of 100 years since the issuance of a credit. If a landowner whose property is enrolled in the offset program harvests too much, experiences a forest fire, or some other effect that negates growth during the monitoring period, that landowner does not receive credit for sequestration and may have to retire additional offset credits to compensate for the lost carbon.

### ACTIONS

- **Promote sustainable forestry for all forest-related products and benefits by providing technical assistance and incentives to private forest landowners.**

- Measure net change of forest carbon stocks on a project/regional basis using Forest Inventory and Analysis data.
- Provide technical support and incentives for restoration of degraded working forests to increase productivity and improve forest structure and resilience.
- Manage white-tailed deer populations to foster forest regeneration where regeneration is impacted by overabundant deer. Manage invasive pests and pathogens to ensure adequate native regeneration of forests.
- Protect existing large contiguous forested areas and maintain permeable landscapes by conserving “stepping stone” forest patches, working forests, and agricultural lands.

### Promoting Urban Forestry and Green Infrastructure

Open space initiatives and conservation efforts can effectively address climate change impacts unique to poor communities and communities of color. Impacts such as heat-related mortality, elevated asthma rates, economic and cultural displacement due to flooding and rising energy costs, air pollution, water pollution, and loss of traditional medicinal plants and animal species relied upon for subsistence, can all be mitigated through open space planning and prioritization of open space initiatives that target these impacts. For instance, more green open space and green infrastructure in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities can ensure overall carbon reductions, mitigate urban heat island effect, improve air quality, reduce combined sewer overflows that compromise water quality, and enhance quality of life in these communities.

#### URBAN and COMMUNITY FORESTRY

All of the trees within a town, village, or city make up the "community forest." A community forest can include street and yard trees, parks, cemeteries, golf courses, school grounds, and undeveloped green spaces. Urban and community forestry is the management of community forests to establish and maintain healthy trees for air and water quality benefits, energy savings, and environmental health, as well as to enhance the quality of life in our urban areas where a majority of our citizens live and work.

Trees have numerous effects on human health and quality of life (see Health Benefits of Open Space). They add aesthetic benefits that soften the gray infrastructure of urban landscapes. When people use parks and shady, tree-lined streets, they are more likely to meet and establish bonds with their neighbors, which help to create a sense of community. When people enjoy spending time in their neighborhoods, they develop pride and a sense of ownership in their communities.

The presence of trees and proximity to parks has been shown to increase residential and commercial property values. Thus, “greening” our urban areas and communities helps to implement Smart Growth principles to combat urban sprawl and make our existing urban areas and communities more attractive.

Social benefits are supplemented with environmental and health benefits. Trees remove air and water



pollutants through both their root systems and their leaves. Tree canopies shade buildings, sidewalks, streets and other structures, keeping them cooler, reducing air conditioning and other energy needs in the summer and reducing the overall urban heat island effect. Strategically placed trees of appropriate species will shelter buildings from cold winds in winter months, reducing heating costs.

**URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT**

The heat island effect is a term that describes the effect caused by a concentration of buildings, concrete and asphalt, such as those in urban areas that absorb and then radiate the heat of the sun, causing temperatures to be higher for an extended period compared to surrounding rural areas. Where there are fewer trees in cities and large communities, solar energy is more readily absorbed into human-made structures, causing higher urban area temperatures. Trees and urban green spaces help to reduce the urban heat island effect, while providing additional benefits that improve the quality of life in urban areas.

Trees act as nature's air conditioners by helping to cool the surrounding air in two ways: (a) by providing shade to keep street and building surfaces cooler; and (b) through evapotranspiration, the process by which trees transpire from both their leaves and root systems. As this moisture evaporates, it dissipates the heat in and around the tree, leading to cooler air in the tree's vicinity.

Higher urban temperatures along with increased air pollution can result in the formation of smog, which has been shown to cause severe respiratory problems for many, leading to increased health costs. Tree leaves can help reduce air pollution by "capturing" airborne particles found in smog, such as nitrogen oxide, hydrocarbons, sulfur dioxide and other particulates, while at the same time releasing oxygen.

**What is Green Infrastructure?**  
A strategically planned and managed network of natural lands, working landscapes, and other open spaces that conserves ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations.  
(Benedict & McMahon, 2006)  
<http://www.conservationfund.org/what-we-do/strategic-conservation-planning/resources/green-infrastructure-resources>

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Increasing the utility and benefits provided by trees and natural systems has led to the coining of the term, "*Green Infrastructure*," to describe the concept of strategically planned and managed networks of natural lands, working landscapes and other open spaces that conserve ecosystem values and functions, providing associated benefits to human populations.

At the landscape scale, green infrastructure includes forests, grasslands, wetlands, riparian zones, and other natural lands. At the site scale in our communities, Green Infrastructure uses plants and natural systems versus human-made, typically concrete-and-steel structures, to

perform functions of cooling, air and water purification, stormwater management, and physical aesthetics. Each form of Green Infrastructure provides multiple benefits, such as absorbing, filtering and slowing down stormwater, reducing the urban heat island effect, open spaces in rural and urban

areas, and filtering pollutants from the air. Examples of site-scale Green Infrastructure include parks, community gardens, rain gardens, green roofs and walls, urban trees and bioswales. Perhaps most important, green infrastructure treats fresh water as the valuable resource that it is, rather than as a waste product to be drained away and discarded.

In 2013, EPA’s Healthy Watersheds Initiative supported the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) in a comprehensive natural resource data compilation, mapping and assessment project in Ulster County. Using the county as a pilot, the GIC wrote a chapter specific to New York in its publication, *Evaluating and Conserving Green Infrastructure Across the Landscape: A Practitioner’s Guide*. This guide and methodology is a useful tool to any county in NY that wishes to identify and evaluate its environmental assets and needs, develop priorities, and make informed land-use decisions that seek to maximize environmental benefits in the context of social and economic considerations. County-to-county expansion of this project would support Ecosystem-Based Management, watershed planning and protection, and other landscape-level Green Infrastructure planning for sustainability.

**ACTIONS**

- **Incorporate trees and the conservation of intact forests and other natural systems, along with management activities that employ the use of trees and shrubs in the design of community non-point source control projects.**
- **Expand state assistance programs for urban and community forestry to increase the tree canopy in New York's communities.**
  - Expand and enhance Project Learning Tree workshops for educators to inform urban students and residents of the importance of their city trees and urban forests.
  - Promote the benefits of trees and native vegetation through Arbor Day and community tree planting events, service foresters, the Tree City USA program, and DEC’s public website.
  - Promote partnerships with industry professionals to build a healthy forest canopy statewide.
- **Promote the use of Green Infrastructure and enhance state programs that support its implementation.**
  - Establish, research and support the propagation and use of native tree, shrub, vine, and other

**THE COST OF MANAGING STORMWATER**

The cost effectiveness of Green Infrastructure techniques concerning stormwater management has been thoroughly documented by the USEPA's 2007 report, *Reducing Stormwater Costs through Low Impact Development (LID) Strategies and Practices*. This report offers detailed financial information on the benefits of LID. In the majority of 17 case studies of various municipalities in the country, the cost of LID techniques was 15 to 80% less than conventional techniques used to manage stormwater. Similarly, *Riverkeeper's* 2007 report, "Sustainable Raindrops," (<http://www.riverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Sustainable-Raindrops-Report-1-8-08.pdf>) demonstrates the effectiveness of stormwater source controls using "green" techniques.

## ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

---

- plant species at the Saratoga Tree Nursery to provide greater diversity in native species in the commercial market, as well as to other state agencies, suitable for use in urban forestry and green infrastructure applications. (DEC)
- Enhance DEC’s Green Infrastructure program through Web-based resources and technical assistance to local governments, other state agencies, commercial nurseries and private citizens.
  - Support counties in conducting Green Infrastructure assessments using *Evaluating and Conserving Green Infrastructure Across the Landscape: A Practitioner’s Guide*, developed by the Green Infrastructure Center.
  - **Expand state assistance to the Office of Environmental Justice “Green Gems” program to support Green Infrastructure projects in Environmental Justice communities.**
  - **Restore and enhance public parks, open space and trails to buffer and connect developed areas from the effects of climate change.**

ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

**ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A  
HEALTHY PUBLIC  
AND VIBRANT ECONOMY  
GREENING NEW YORK'S ECONOMY  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

PROVIDING WATERSHED AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTIONS

COMMUNITY GREENING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

HEALTH BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

CONNECTING TO OUR FOOD AND OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

PROMOTING SMART GROWTH AND IMPROVING OUR TRANSPORTATION USES

# ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

We have tremendous capacity to use the preservation of open space to enhance the cities, towns, communities and neighborhoods where we live. Conserving natural places is one of the essential elements of being a green and sustainable community.

Preservation and establishment of urban parks, greenways, trailways, and waterfront access help maintain and improve our quality of life. Environmental remediation enables cities and towns to clean up and safely redevelop contaminated land, a key component of “smart growth.” Smart growth seeks to redirect economic development into developed areas and away from the open space periphery. Open space corridors complement community forestry to help densely populated towns and cities maintain green spaces and streetscapes. Watershed and water quality protection help prevent pollution of rivers and streams and maintain a safe water supply. New models of community design and transportation efficiency contribute to quality of life, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower energy use.

## Providing Watershed and Water Quality Protections

Our cities depend upon the surrounding countryside for their water supplies. We must continue to protect our state's water quality through acquisition of land and easements, appropriate regulation, and innovative means such as management agreements executed by the City of New York, upstate watershed communities, the State, certain environmental groups and the EPA. These measures need to be accomplished through appropriate cooperative planning with local governments, as was accomplished with the historic 1997 New York City Watershed Agreement. Planning for the protection of lands for quality water supplies also protects important natural areas and maintains areas of open space around cities, which in turn provides places for recreation and buffers the impacts of urban development. As the vast majority of aging infrastructure impacts (current and potential) lie in more densely populated coastal areas, the failure to act on this impending threat will make it difficult to maintain, improve or restore water quality in coastal waters.

The Plan's priority conservation projects (see Chapter V), identify some of our most significant areas critical to protecting healthy communities. These projects fall under three specific categories: Water Resource Protection projects, which use open space to protect vital watersheds and aquifer recharge areas from pollution and degradation of biological capacity; Watershed Protection projects, which protect lands within the watershed of a publicly owned water supply reservoir (lands are protected from uses which have the potential to pollute the water supply, either through surface runoff or flow through groundwater, which discharges to reservoirs and streams); and Aquifer Protection projects, which protect either lands through which water enters the soil and moves to the water table to

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

replenish the underlying groundwater reservoir, or lands needed for wellhead protection zones, which protect water supply wells.

The value of pollutant reductions and habitat improvements provided by stream buffers is well established.

### Partnering with Local Governments

There remains a need for local government planning and education. Many municipal board members lack the knowledge and resources for planning and open space preservation. In these tough economic times, more resources should be devoted to educating local municipal officials, giving them the tools to preserve open space and assistance needed for land-use planning.

Partnerships among land trusts and local, county and state governments can help build the capacity of local governments around the State to develop and implement local open space protection programs.

**The question: How can we improve?** The answer: With partnerships.

### ACTIONS

- **Support and provide technical assistance for comprehensive watershed planning at the state, regional and local government level. (DEC, DOS and partners) See also recommendations for Climate Change.**
  - Promote forest land use statewide as the preferred land use for attaining high water-quality resources, as identified in the NYC Watershed. (DEC, DOS and partners)
  - Implement comprehensive sub-watershed management plans to restore beneficial uses in pathogen impaired water bodies.
  - Finalize target ecosystem characteristics for the New York/New Jersey harbor to assist in establishing watershed habitat restoration goals.
  - Consider the functions and values of wetlands, and seek opportunities to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to these valuable and fragile areas.
  - Provide training and technical assistance on conducting stream restoration, dredging and stream corridor management projects in a manner consistent with best flow management principles that are protective of aquatic and wildlife habitats. (DEC and partners)
  - Support efforts to maintain and increase federal funding for estuary and watershed-based programs, including the Long Island Sound Study, Lake Champlain Basin Program, New York–New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program, Chesapeake Bay Program and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- **Promote public understanding of watersheds and water quality, including the life they support, their role in the global ecosystem and the challenges watersheds face and how they can be met.**
  - Provide Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) and Aquatic WILD workshops for educators to enhance lessons that correlate to Common Core standards.

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

- Implement the targets of the Education Goal of the Hudson River Estuary Program’s Action Agenda.
- **Support preservation and, where possible, tree planting in riparian areas that create effective buffers. Preservation can be through acquisition of riparian areas or easements. Such preservation can be accomplished through one funding source or program or combinations of programs, such as the NRCS Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program; or a watershed program, such as the Hudson River Estuary Program.**
- **Work to enhance funding opportunities available to protect watersheds and improve water quality.**
  - Support efforts to increase federal funding to help address the critical need for repair and improvements to aging drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in our State over the next 20 years. (DEC and EFC)
  - Expand use of the State Revolving Fund by state and local governments and qualified non-profit conservation organizations to acquire open space with direct influence on non-point source water quality. (DEC, EFC and DOB)
  - Expand use of the State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to invest in agricultural and non-agricultural non-point source abatement and control as a complement to land acquisition and open space.
- **Provide technical assistance and training on implementation of environmentally friendly stormwater control measures. (See also recommendations for urban and community forestry and green infrastructure in Climate Change.)**
  - Enlist partners in the continued public education and implementation of the EPA-mandated Phase II Stormwater practices to reduce water quality impacts.
  - Promote Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure programs for reducing stormwater runoff volumes and pollutant loads. (DEC, DOS and partners)
  - Develop guidance for state and local officials and not-for-profit partners on how the design, acquisition, and conservation of open space can help achieve stormwater management goals in urban areas.
  - Incorporate Smart Growth site design and Green Infrastructure to enhance stormwater reduction and management practices into development projects in watershed and particularly, coastal areas.
- **Continue Interagency Aquatic Connections Team (InterACT), formed in 2007 and comprising government and non-government organizations, provides a forum for technical experts in ecological processes, stream dynamics and engineering design to come together and discuss how to solve many challenges involved in constructing road and stream crossings.**

## Community Greening for Environmental Justice

Community greening efforts, such as tree planting and community gardens, are valuable to minority and low-income communities, particularly in urban areas where green open space is scarce. Community greening offers a significant impact with smaller scale efforts. It can help to revitalize and beautify neighborhoods, and at the same time serve as a carbon sink to reduce local carbon dioxide levels; help alleviate urban heat island problems associated with concrete and stone structures; and serve as a filtration system for stormwater. In addition to being beneficial to the environment, greening efforts foster good stewardship and community commitment, from which social and economic benefits can follow.

### ACTIONS

- **Develop new and enhance existing programs to provide equitable open space and recreational resources for underserved communities.**
  - Continue to implement the Environmental Justice (EJ) Community Impact Grant Program to assist community organizations in addressing environmental and human health impacts in their neighborhoods.
  - Continue to partner with government and non-government organizations and local community groups to develop and implement green infrastructure and green street initiatives.
  - Support community-centered environmental learning for urban youth in conjunction with colleges, trade schools and job training programs that provide training in green roof installation and maintenance, urban farming and green collar jobs.
  - Complete mapping to identify environmental justice issue areas to inform policy-making and to prioritize open space conservation in urban communities.
  - Establish a set of criteria or benchmarks by which to measure progress achieved in the equitable distribution of open space in urban communities.
  - Prioritize and increase purchases of small parcels of open space in urban communities.

## Health Benefits of Forests and Open Space

Most of us sense that taking a walk in the woods or a park is good for us beyond the exercise. We take a break from the rush of our daily lives. We enjoy the beauty and peace of being in a natural setting. These perceived improvements in how we feel are real. Research shows that spending time in nature, green spaces and forests makes us healthier.

Spending time in forests boosts our immune system. Trees give off chemicals called phytoncides. When we breathe in these chemicals, our bodies respond by increasing the number and activity of a certain type of white blood cell called natural killer cells. These cells kill tumor and virus-infected cells in our bodies.



## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

Spending time in natural settings, especially settings with water, reduces blood pressure, stress, anxiety, depression, anger and fatigue.

Trying to focus on many activities or even a single thing for long periods can mentally drain us, a phenomenon called Directed Attention Fatigue. Spending time in nature gives the cognitive portion of our brain a break, enabling us to focus better and be more patient. Children who spend time in natural outdoor environments are better able to pay attention and control impulses.

Hospital patients with “green” views have shorter postoperative stays, take fewer painkillers, and have slightly fewer postsurgical complications compared to those who have no view or a view of a cement wall.

Treed neighborhoods reduce violence. This can be due to many factors. Violence increases during heat waves, and trees keep temperatures lower. Studies of urban housing and trees report that residents have better relations with neighbors in treed communities. Perhaps this provides a support network that prevents frustrations from growing to the point of lashing out with violence.

Trees and nature provide much more than just a pretty view. Green environments, urban and rural, are essential to a healthy society. Even five minutes around trees or in green spaces can improve health. Think of green environments as a free “prescription,” with no negative side effects.

### ACTIONS

- **Establish partnerships among outdoor recreation agencies and health agencies to get more people outside.**
- **Conduct research to expand knowledge of phytoncides given off by trees found in New York communities and forests.**
- **Work with the Urban Forestry Council, ReLeaf, and government agencies and partners to disseminate information in this field.**
- **Spend more time in forests and natural areas.**
- **Use current and emerging research about the health benefits of forests and natural areas to promote outdoor recreation.**

## Connecting To Our Food and Our Neighborhoods

Farms, whether urban or rural in setting provide precious green and open space, not only where public park access is limited but also where pressure of suburban development has taken hold. Farmers use farmland to provide their neighbors, whether next door or hundreds of miles away, with healthy and nutritious foods. Food provides us with a way to connect with our farmers and our neighbors and to improve our quality of life, whether through visiting a farm, shopping at a farmers market, going to a restaurant, having family or neighbors over for dinner, or growing our own food in a community

## **ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY**

garden. Rural and urban farms provide society with many benefits, including our scenic working landscapes, rural heritage and quality of life, all of which help drive a multibillion-dollar tourism industry and fuel greener economic growth. Farms safeguard wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas, such as meadows, woodlands, wetlands and streams. They also protect local aquifers and other drinking water supplies and reduce cost of services for municipalities.

### **BUILDING COMMUNITY GARDENS AND URBAN FARMS**

State law defines community gardens as “public or private lands upon which citizens of the State have the opportunity to garden on lands on which they do not individually own.” There are well over 1,000 registered or permitted community gardens in New York’s cities and many more cases where residents have rescued derelict private or public lots in an effort to build more livable neighborhoods. In many of New York’s cities, not-for-profit urban farms provide access to fresh fruits and vegetables, knowledge of agriculture and nutrition, economic opportunities and healthier environments to the communities they serve.

### **FARMERS MARKETS**

Urban agriculture has benefitted from the rapid growth and popularity of our state’s nearly 600 farmers markets, many of which operate in low-income neighborhoods with support from the State’s Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Farmers markets are frequently located in public open spaces such as parks, schoolyards, and even at community gardens and urban farms and are typically sponsored by municipalities and community-based organizations. They can provide urban farms with marketing opportunities that encourage youth and adult entrepreneurship in agriculture; infrastructure programs that enable construction and improvement of permanent farmers market facilities; and new semi-permanent open air market sites to ensure community access to fresh, nutritious locally grown produce, while supporting both rural farmland and community gardening, open space protection efforts.

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, urban farm stands, and mobile markets that bring local produce to underserved neighborhoods also have proven critical to preserving rural and urban farmland. The majority of New York’s community gardens and urban farms are in low-income and minority communities. However, there is also increasing interest in food-producing community gardens in rural areas where land is available but access to retail outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables is limited.

Community gardens and urban farms provide precious green space in areas where public parks are scarce; provide urban families with a way to grow nutritious fresh foods; can serve as emergency food sites; and provide food for farmers’ markets and local restaurants. Community-supported agriculture programs help educate members about the natural world, the value of local foods and good nutrition and that environmental stewardship is relevant to neighborhood urban areas, not just distant forests. These green spaces also provide safe areas for exercise in communities with poor access to physical activity outlets. They deliver environmental benefits, such as reduced city heat, decreased storm water

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

runoff, safer soil, composting sites and natural habitats. And they bring community members together, filling an important social function in neighborhoods where gathering spaces are limited.

### ACTIONS

- **Continue to support Stony Kill Foundation in their efforts to educate urban children about sources of food and demonstrate sound agricultural practices at Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center, which has a working farm, community garden plots and raised beds for persons with disabilities. As part of Operation Explore, upper elementary school students from New York City visit Stony Kill and learn about sustainable agriculture practices and how plants grow, and they have an opportunity to see farm animals up close (pigs, cows, sheep and chickens) to learn where their milk, eggs, bacon and hamburgers come from.**
- **Promote local food production and development of a conservation ethic by providing and maintaining opportunities and resources to facilitate the initiation and continuation of urban farming and community gardening.**
  - Continue to fund grant programs that support community gardens and urban farms, especially focused on low-income communities.
  - Encourage the dedication of vacant private and publicly owned land in low-income communities for community gardening and urban farming, including the use of “underused” park land for productive community gardening and educational farming purposes.
  - Promote brownfield remediation in low-income communities with dedicated reuse for open space with raised-bed planters for community gardens and urban farming opportunities.
  - Collaborate with state and municipal agencies to provide adequate technical assistance to assess the toxicity of potential community garden and farm sites.
  - Assist in extending land trust opportunities to community gardens with limited or no municipal protections and at risk of losing sites to development or sale of public or private land.
  - Encourage the inclusion of community gardeners in municipal open space planning, as gardeners are natural partners for “greening the cityscape.”
  - Allocate resources to existing urban farm sites and community gardens to expand environmental stewardship efforts. As small, nimble organizations, community gardeners are often able to take the lead on best practices such as rainwater harvesting and decentralized city composting programs.

## Promoting Smart Growth and Improving Our Transportation Uses

### SMART GROWTH

“Smart Growth” is planned growth that balances the need for economic development with the desire to enhance our natural and built environments. As an overriding principle, it promotes, directs, and provides incentives for growth in populated, developed areas with infrastructure and amenities to

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

sustain such growth. By focusing growth in appropriate areas, we protect our forest, agricultural and habitat resources.

The Smart Growth Network was created in 1996 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, along with several non-profit and government organizations. It was developed in response to increasing community concerns about the need for new ways to grow that boost the economy, protect the environment, and enhance community vitality. The Network's partners include environmental groups, historic preservation organizations, professional organizations, developers, real estate interests, and local and state government entities. The following Smart Growth Principles were adapted from those developed by the Network:

- **Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities** – Smart Growth directs development toward existing communities already served by public infrastructure, to use the resources they offer and to conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.
- **Foster long-term comprehensive planning** – Smart Growth involves reconciling local and regional plans to better protect natural and cultural resources and foster more efficient development and maintenance of infrastructure.
- **Foster strong, sustainable businesses in community centers** – Smart Growth involves fostering sustainable economic developments in urban areas, as opposed to scattered economic development.
- **Mix land uses** – A mix of land uses can convey substantial fiscal and economic benefits by placing commercial uses in proximity to residential areas as a critical component of achieving viable places to live.
- **Provide a variety of transportation choices** – Providing people with efficient and alternative transportation choices fosters greater community opportunities for housing, shopping, and jobs compliant with Smart Growth principles.
- **Create a range of housing opportunities and choices** – Provide quality housing with efficient access to resources for people of all income levels.
- **Create walkable neighborhoods** – Walkable communities make pedestrian activity possible by mixing land uses and building compactly, thus expanding transportation options, and creating complete streets that better serve a range of users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and automobiles.
- **Preserve open space, forests, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas** – Open space preservation bolsters local economies, preserves critical environmental areas, improves communities' quality of life, and guides new growth into existing communities.
- **Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place** – Smart Growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and construction which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

- **Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective** – It is important to create a fertile environment for innovative, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use projects, where government can provide leadership for Smart Growth.
- **Take advantage of green building design** – Smart Growth involves energy conservation measures, such as proper building placement for passive solar heating and the use of locally produced building materials.
- **Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions** – Collaborative efforts can lead to creative resolutions of development issues and greater community understanding of the importance of good planning and investment, which results in great places to live, work, shop and play.

### Sprawl without Growth

A 2003 land-use study of upstate New York showed a 30% increase in land development between 1982 and 1997 but only a 2.6 % growth in population during the same period. The study was appropriately titled “Sprawl Without Growth.”

**Brookings Institution, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, October 2003, Survey Series**

[www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2003/10/demographics\\_pendall/200310\\_Pendall.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2003/10/demographics_pendall/200310_Pendall.pdf)

The New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act was signed into law in August 2010 and took effect the following month as an amendment to Environmental Conservation Law. The Act is intended to minimize the unnecessary cost of sprawl development and requires state infrastructure agencies to ensure public infrastructure projects undergo a consistency evaluation and attestation using the ten Smart Growth criteria. This review ensures projects are consistent with the relevant criteria to the extent practicable. The Act also requires the commissioners of state infrastructure agencies to establish an internal advisory committee to provide direction on compliance with the Act as it applies to agency policies, programs and projects and to ensure the requirement to solicit input from and consult with various representatives of affected communities has been met.

The following are the State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Act criteria:

- To advance projects for the use, maintenance or improvement of existing infrastructure;
- To advance projects located in municipal centers;
- To advance projects in developed areas or areas designated for concentrated infill development in a municipally approved comprehensive land-use plan, local waterfront revitalization plan and/or brownfield opportunity area plan;
- To protect, preserve and enhance the state's resources, including agricultural land, forests, surface and groundwater, air quality, recreation and open space, scenic areas, and significant historic and archeological resources;
- To foster mixed land uses and compact development, downtown revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, the enhancement of beauty in public spaces, the diversity and affordability of housing in proximity to places of employment, recreation and commercial development and the integration of all income and age groups;

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

- To provide mobility through transportation choices, including improved public transportation and reduced automobile dependency;
- To coordinate state and local government and inter-municipal and regional planning;
- To participate in community-based planning and collaboration;
- To ensure predictability in building and land-use codes; and
- To promote sustainability by strengthening existing and creating new communities which reduce greenhouse gas emissions and do not compromise the needs of future generations by, among other means, encouraging broad-based public involvement in developing and implementing a community plan and ensuring the governance structure is adequate to sustain its implementation.

New York is a home-rule state, and, to a large extent, local governments are best positioned to advance these goals through local land-use planning coupled with regional coordination.

### TRANSPORTATION USES

Transportation and land use are inexorably connected. Every land-use decision has transportation implications, and, in turn, every transportation action affects land use. Although the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) has overall responsibility for transportation policy and planning, the state's transportation network is owned and operated by many entities, including cities, towns, villages, public authorities and private owners, such as transit, rail, port and airport operators.

The programmatic and infrastructure investment decisions made by these transportation entities will help define how Smart Growth is attained. In addition, zoning, land-use decisions and policies at the local level are instrumental in shaping community structure. Investment decisions by the private sector will also play a significant role, as private investors will largely determine where, when, what type, and how much growth will take place. State and local governments can influence and, in some cases, direct private investment decisions to conform to the principles of Smart Growth.

Every metropolitan area in the United States with a population of over 50,000 must have a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation to qualify for any federal transportation funding. The MPO provides a forum for state and local officials to discuss transportation issues and reach a consensus on transportation plans and specific programs of transportation projects. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) relies on each MPO to make sure the transportation projects that use federal funds are the products of a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process and meet the priorities of the metropolitan area. MPOs can provide significant influence in promoting Smart Growth within densely populated areas of the State.

Both public and private entities are required by state and federal law (State Environmental Quality Review Act, Federal Clean Air Act and many others) to consider the impact of transportation decisions and improvements on the environment, quality of life and open space. DOT routinely includes specific environmental elements in its projects and activities, has developed programmatic approaches to

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

ensure compliance and meet environmental objectives, partners and coordinates activities with localities and other governmental agencies, and has instituted a cultural change throughout DOT to adopt an environmental ethic.

Local governments wield significant influence on smart growth through their ability to conduct comprehensive planning and zoning and attract investment. Communities can identify town centers, transportation hubs, downtowns and other areas of high density and high levels of commercial activity. Zoning through form-based codes can shape these areas as they grow to take on a distinctly close-knit and vibrant character different from surrounding neighborhoods. Infrastructure investments can be targeted to encourage development in such areas and attract private investment. Targeting growth in centers of activity is a guiding principle that can be applied anywhere people live and conduct business, from mountain resort towns and rural town centers, to suburban places emerging as centers of regional activity and traditional downtowns. Making populated places attractive and providing amenities to vitalize and nourish the people they attract can help keep nearby lands free from development.

Special considerations for underserved, minority and low-income populations include access to open space close to their communities; availability of public transportation to existing open space; and elimination of obstructions that limit access to existing open space, such as roadways, fences and environmental hazards.

### ACTIONS

- **Implement the requirements and promote the principles of the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act.**
- **Expand enabling legislation and encourage communities to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to boost local planning and open space conservation. The CPA allows localities to designate up to 2% of the real estate transfer tax revenues to an open space acquisition account, approved by local residents.**
- **Promote park-wide planning and hamlet revitalization in the Adirondack and Catskill parks.**
- **Implement the 2005–2030 Statewide Transportation Master Plan. This plan discourages sprawl and encourages energy efficiency and emission-friendly activities and mode choices such as bicycling, walking and public transit.**
- **Encourage all levels of government to adopt and implement Complete Streets Programs to insure that all modes of transportation are considered for road maintenance, repair, improvement and construction projects.**
- **Encourage Amtrak to offer roll-on service for bicycles on all trains servicing stops in NYS.**
- **Work collaboratively with planning partners at regional and local levels, including Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), public authorities and planning boards/departments as a means of coordinating land-use planning and transportation investment strategies.**

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

- Encourage localities to adopt land–use plans that adequately guide future growth and help conserve open spaces.
- Encourage transportation operators to support community planning efforts that promote higher population densities, friendly development and preservation of farmland.
- Support local land–use planning efforts to ensure that transportation implications of specific local plans are appropriately considered.
- Promote transportation connecting communities to open space, including low–cost and easily accessible public transportation.
- Implement, as appropriate, Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS), a design approach wherein safe transportation solutions are designed in harmony with the community and the environment. CSS strive to balance environmental, scenic, aesthetic, cultural and natural resources, and community and transportation service needs. Context–sensitive projects recognize community goals and are designed, built and maintained to be sustainable, minimizing disruption to the community and the environment
- Support eco–tourism, which is a growing and sustainable part of our economy, by considering opportunities for new or rehabilitated fishing access and trailhead parking areas, historic markers and other interpretive signing, improved bikeway and pedestrian facilities, and new scenic overlooks.
- Implement the policy recommendations contained in the State Energy Plan, including actions to address greenhouse gas emissions and energy–use goals such as those that support smart growth and increased opportunities to access energy efficient transportation.
- Ensure that the State Energy Plan goals and recommendations are adopted throughout the transportation sector.
- Support the State's Scenic Byways in implementation of their Corridor Management Plans. These publicly developed multi–community plans present a strategy for stewardship of the byways' underlying resources, as well as for promotion of tourism and economic development.
- Use form–based codes to transform or create town centers.



# **PROTECTING, USING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING OUR WORKING FARMS AND FORESTS

STEWARDING OUR OPEN SPACES

PRESERVING OUR SCENIC, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

# PROTECTING, UTILIZING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

New York's exceptional natural resources include the coasts of Long Island, the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve, the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes, the Tug Hill Plateau, the Allegheny River Basin, and the Niagara River Escarpment. Our natural assets encompass watersheds that provide abundant and clean water supplies; wetlands that support a rich biodiversity of terrestrial and aquatic species, provide habitat and limit flooding; and natural heritage and beauty that bring tourism and enhance our quality of life. Our state has a long history of protecting these valuable natural assets, while at the same time using them for the benefit of New Yorkers. Our quality of life stems in part from the quality of our water, which is maintained by healthy coasts, watersheds, forests, wetlands, marine ecosystems and infrastructure, including flood control and wastewater treatment infrastructure.

## Supporting Our Working Farms and Forests

### WORKING LANDSCAPES

New York's working landscapes are important economic and cultural resources. Their protection and perpetuation is economically beneficial and culturally important because landscapes maintain a certain atmosphere that has largely disappeared as a result of the urbanization of our society.

People who use farmlands, forests and shorelines for commercial purposes are not only stewards of the land but also business people who must support families, employees and stockholders. As farmlands and forestlands have always provided multiple resource values to their owners and to all state citizens, productive forest land and prime agricultural soils are valuable and vulnerable resources for all of us.

### SERVICES TO SUPPORT PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

Fulfilling the demand for goods and services from private land requires long-term appropriate use and scientific, sustainable management. Resource professionals play a key role in providing technical advice and assistance to landowners in the stewardship of their lands. Landowners and managers must be informed decision-makers to meet their objectives and ensure the sustainability and quality of their valuable lands. It is recognized that access to current and future timber and agricultural product supplies and other goods and services relies on the interest, willingness and performance of hundreds of thousands of forest and agricultural landowners.

When open space retention and sustainable resource management has the potential to be profitable, then landowners will more readily support this land use, and resist invitations to convert their open space to other uses or mismanage the resources under their control. Private landowners who are motivated, assisted and supported in actively managing their lands can significantly improve or enhance the personal and public benefits those lands provide. Financial incentives have proven to be an effective means of encouraging and supporting sustainable land management practices and retention of working landscape open space.

### **OUR WORKING FARMS**

Article XIV, Section 4 of the N.Y.S. Constitution, added in 1969, provides in part that “[t]he policy of the State shall be to:

*“...conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural land for production of food and other agricultural products. It is also the declared policy of the State to conserve and protect agricultural lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide needed open spaces for clean air, watersheds, as well as for aesthetic purposes.”*

In 1971, the Agricultural Districts Law (Agriculture and Markets Law–AML– Article 25–AA) was enacted, implementing that policy. This law helps maintain a supportive operating environment for farm businesses in state–certified districts through several “right to farm” provisions.

In 1992, the Agricultural Protection Act was passed, creating Article 25–AAA to encourage further development of agricultural and farmland protection programs at the state and local levels. The legislation is intended to support local efforts to protect agricultural land and ensure the continued economic viability of the state’s agricultural industry. This strong connection between the protection of productive agricultural land resources and the economic viability of farm businesses is integral to New York’s farmland protection efforts.

### **OUR WORKING FORESTS**

Supporting New York's forest–based economy offers additional opportunities for promoting sustainable forest management and long–term retention of forested open space, particularly in large tracts that have significant ecological benefits. Additionally, working forests have long been used for hunting, trapping, fishing and other forms of recreation while protecting water and air quality. Markets for wood products provide direct economic returns and incentives to landowners and encourage the practice of sustainable forest management. Viable and diverse markets for a broad range of forest products enable managers and landowners to do a better job of silviculture—managing the establishment, composition, growth and regeneration of forest stands—by providing returns from a variety of timber products, not just the biggest and best trees of a few species.

Supporting and building our local industrial capacity adds value to our forests and management by bringing diverse markets closer to the raw material producers. A “critical mass” of sustainably managed

forest land, available for wood products harvesting, is vital for supporting a diverse forest-based industry. Conversely, a viable, diverse, forest-based economy is essential to the retention and sustainable management of private forested open space.

### **CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

Private forestry is essential to the future of our State. It is a practice that remains one of our long running, traditional, natural resource-based industries and is now beginning to play an increasingly important ecosystem role in the face of global climate change. Since 1995, DEC has acquired more than 780,000 acres of new working forest easements, most located in the Adirondack Park and the Tug Hill. With the trend in the last 20 years of major forest product industries selling off large tracts of their land holdings to private timber investment companies, sustaining this industry and the substantial values provided by our forests, including public recreational access, has become a primary focus of our open space conservation efforts at this critical juncture in New York's history. Three elements that have become important to every working forest easement are:

- ✓ Sustainable forestry, which can be achieved through a requirement for forest certification from one of several approved certification programs;
- ✓ Public recreation rights, including hiking, watching wildlife, camping, hunting, canoeing, appropriate motor vehicle use, and snowmobiling in balance with private recreation activities where they exist prior to the easement; and
- ✓ Extinguishment of residential or non-forestry commercial development rights to ensure these lands will be protected in perpetuity from conversion to non-forestry uses.

The objective of the working conservation easement program is to allow the purchase of easements over productive forest land so that landowners are paid to limit their right to develop their land, while retaining it as private property dedicated to forest resource use. To be most effective, expenditures for protection of these landscapes should take place on blocks of land so that resource uses such as forestry and recreation can continue over the long run without interference from other land uses.

Protecting working forests and other important habitats through conservation easements can also be a viable solution to the problems of rising property taxes, suburban and recreational development, high inheritance taxes, short-sighted forest management and lack of management information. In addition to providing an immediate cash flow to the landowner, easements can also relieve some of the property tax burden if subsequent assessments reflect a reduced property value.

Easements are not, however, a "free-ticket" to open space conservation. Using conservation easements to protect working forests requires the administrative oversight to enforce and manage these often complex agreements. Recent DEC experiences in the Adirondacks with large-scale working forest easements have shown that major time and staff investment is necessary to verify that easement agreements are being followed by the parties and that unauthorized public use or private actions are

not occurring. Publicly held conservation easements require a corresponding investment of resources for staffing and non-personnel resources for administration and management to protect all parties' rights and interests.

### **ACTIONS**

- **Working Farms**

- Support the work of municipalities in developing or updating local Agricultural and Farmland Protections Plans through the Farmland Protection Planning Grants program administered by DAM.
- Provide financial and technical support to project sponsors of locally led programs that protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses and support a robust agricultural economy.
- Continue to support state, local government and non-profit acquisition of conservation easements on priority viable agricultural lands identified by the Regional Open Space Advisory Committees.
- Continue to refine the Farmland Protection Implementation Grants program administered by DAM to ensure timely completion of awarded projects and that local sponsors are afforded a menu of fundable project options.
- Support tax incentives and regulatory relief for agriculture-based industries.
- Support the concept of foodsheds as Scenic Hudson has in the Hudson Valley and the Region 3 Regional Advisory Committee discusses in its report.
- Provide access for smaller farming operations to technical and financial support for the development of management plans and implementation of best management practices equal to that of larger Consolidated Animal Feeding Operations.

- **Working Forests**

- Support tax incentives and regulatory relief for forest-based industries.
- Support technology transfer, technical assistance and financial support for new forest product development, industry modernization and the adoption of new, higher-yield, environmentally friendly manufacturing technologies.
- Improve skill-building initiatives within forest-based industries to improve competitiveness, safety and economic viability.
- Continue to support state, local government and non-profit acquisition of or easements on priority forest lands (listed in Chapter V) identified by the Regional Open Space Advisory Committees.
- Support sustainable forestry by promoting forest-based woody feedstocks as an important bio-based source for space heating and/or cogeneration of heat and power, including the use of low-grade wood for community-scale biomass projects.
- Develop an improved forestry and open space incentives program that includes more landowners, encourages sustainable management of private forest lands and related resources

and that provides other environmental benefits to the public.

- Continue to promote sustainable forest management for all forest-related products and benefits by providing technical assistance and incentives to private forest landowners.
- Promote and encourage private forest owners to enroll in recognized forest certification programs that require the implementation of sound forest management practices.
- Work to improve or replace the current Forest Tax Law Program, 480-a, an incentive to encourage private land owners who practice sound forest management for timber products but who also retain their lands in open space and provide other non-timber goods and ecological services.
- As part of an improved forest management incentive, focus on encouraging forest landowners to seek professional technical assistance and advice before undertaking a timber harvest.
- Promote the use of the EQIP Forest Conservation cost share program provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and assisted by DEC Forestry staff. Continue to make the case for additional funding for this valuable program.
- Recognize and promote the viability of even-aged forest management practices as essential to sustaining early successional forest conditions and the benefits derived from these conditions.
- Consider other programs, voluntary or regulatory, that would encourage or require the use of a professional forester and/or a trained and certified logging contractor in undertaking timber harvesting activities.

## **Stewarding Our Open Spaces**

### **STEWARDSHIP OF STATE LANDS**

New York's state-owned lands represent an investment and opportunity for existing and future generations. State lands offer residents and visitors a multitude of outdoor recreation opportunities. Outdoor recreation and tourism contribute greatly to the state's economic wellbeing as described in *Promoting Outdoor Recreation*. Because of these benefits, stewardship and provision of access to state-owned lands are high priorities for the commissioners of DEC and OPRHP. Through the NYWorks program, OPRHP is investing in maintaining and enhancing State Parks and DEC is making similar investments in its recreational infrastructure. Quality experiences are key to developing and maintaining a broad group of users who enjoy and support this valuable resource.

Currently, DEC and OPRHP manage nearly 5.2 million acres of open space. OPRHP manages 341,000 acres that serve 65 million visitors annually. DEC manages nearly 3 million acres of Forest Preserve, 802,000 acres of State Forests and Multiple Use Areas, and 202,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas.

State lands require major capital expenditures and management actions to address specific conditions. Maintenance is also needed to ensure adequate protection of these publicly owned natural resources. Since 1993, a total of \$213.3 million in EPF resources has been devoted to the stewardship needs of

## **PROTECTING, USING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

OPRHP and DEC in addition to \$50 million from the Bond Act of 1996. The 2016–17 enacted budget includes an additional \$28 million from the Environmental Protection Fund for stewardship of public lands to complement other available funding sources. This will help both DEC and OPRHP rehabilitate and improve facilities on many state-owned lands, benefitting and expanding recreational opportunities for all New Yorkers and visitors who enjoy and take advantage of what these lands have to offer, and protecting the natural resources entrusted to the stewardship of the State for this generation and future generations. There will be a continued need to make improvements for safe access and use of the existing and newly acquired open spaces.

The mission of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York residents and visitors, and to be responsible stewards of its valuable natural, historic and cultural resources. New York's 180 State Parks and 35 Historic Sites are recognized as unique and irreplaceable public assets. Benefits attributable to public use of parks include providing a stimulus for tourism, contributing to civic pride and improving quality of life.

State Parks infrastructure is aging – more than 40% of all buildings in the State Parks are more than 50 years old. Inherent with any aging system is the need for rehabilitation. This is compounded by the increased recreational demands being placed on these systems. Aquifer protection, safeguarding potable water systems, code compliance and structure renovations are among key priorities for remediation. Equally important is the need to provide adequate levels of preventative maintenance to avoid the need for major rehabilitation in the future. It is also essential to recognize that facilities have a life expectancy, and natural resources can sustain only a finite level of use and still maintain their integrity.

In the last decade, beaches and swimming pools have been reopened, sewage and water systems upgraded, roofs and foundations rehabilitated and potential threats to natural and scenic resources identified. There is a continuous effort to revisit current master plans for existing parks and undertake comprehensive planning and preparation of management plans for new acquisitions. Management plans, although no substitute for more comprehensive planning, provide daily guidance for managing natural, cultural and recreation resources and public access to new areas.

The NY Parks 2020 program is a multi-year commitment to leverage \$900 million in private and public funding for State Parks from 2011 to 2020. The 2016–17 State Budget allocates \$90 million toward this initiative.

DEC is the principal land manager of more than four million acres of publicly owned lands and conservation easements, including the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve, reforestation lands and multiple use areas, Wildlife Management Areas, unique areas, tidal wetlands, freshwater wetlands, and several other categories. While all of these categories share certain common stewardship needs, such

## **PROTECTING, USING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

as boundary line maintenance and routine conservation officer and forest ranger patrols, each of these categories has distinct needs as well.

DEC's lands and accompanying infrastructure are extremely diverse in number and type. With the wealth of lands and facilities comes the responsibility to protect, preserve, rehabilitate and construct facilities to provide for a safe, sanitary, energy-efficient, ecologically rich, accessible and aesthetically pleasing environment for users, visitors and employees. Achieving this mission requires the integration of management, technical, fiscal and administrative services of DEC and sufficient resources to get the job done.

DEC's ability to adequately maintain these resources is greatly enhanced with the help of many individuals and groups that volunteer their time and talent to help preserve and enhance them for all to enjoy. DEC has made use of volunteers for a wide range of activities, such as establishing or maintaining trails, providing interpretive services for school groups and other citizens, managing fish and wildlife habitats, monitoring and controlling invasive plant species, remediating vandalism, picking up litter and trash, or otherwise providing positive benefits to state land and facilities. In 2013, DEC implemented the Volunteer Stewardship Agreement program to replace the Adopt a Natural Resource program to provide better protections for its important volunteers (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/90822.html>).

Because of DEC's large and diverse land holdings, the historic properties for which it is responsible are numerous and varied. These include a full range of historically significant buildings and structures, such as Camp Santanoni, the Caledonia and Adirondack fish hatcheries, fire towers, cabins and other buildings built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930's Depression. Several hundred prehistoric and historic archaeological sites are located on DEC lands and waters. DEC is also responsible for historic archaeological resources at Crown Point and the Lake George Battlefield. Lakes George and Champlain also contain unique and highly significant shipwrecks. Many of these properties are listed in the state and national Register of Historic Places, and several are National Historic Landmarks.

Fostering environmental stewardship requires a multi-phase approach that will occur over several years. The cumulative benefits of these actions will have the greatest impacts in improving stewardship of the state's resources. Some actions will require limited fiscal resources, while others will require a recurring investment and commitment of fiscal resources. This will be difficult in times of competing national and state priorities but will result in improving the quality of life for all state residents.

### **STEWARDSHIP OF PRIVATE LANDS**

Approximately 85 percent of New York's land and water base of 31.1 million acres is privately owned, generally by individual landowners. More than 19 million acres or 63% of New York's land base is classified as forestland. Clearly, many of the public benefits associated with open space derive from lands held and managed by individuals, clubs, partnerships, corporations, farmers, associations and



non-governmental organizations. These same private owners also bear the majority of the costs related to providing these benefits, including initial purchase, investments in cultural operations, protection from insects and disease, management and annual real property taxes.

Most of New York's watersheds are protected by primarily forested open space, largely comprising privately owned land. These watersheds provide abundant, clean water for daily consumption, recreation and fish and wildlife habitat.

It is unrealistic to expect that the state or federal government could afford to purchase the majority of this private land or would ever want to supplant private ownership of property. Yet the public good, benefits, and necessities derived from open space require an expanded set of public programs, assistance, incentives, policies, regulations and other strategies to ensure the retention of our open space resources within a private land ownership context. Critical to the goal of creating a permanent framework of open space, therefore, is state-level encouragement and motivation of private land-owners to voluntarily contribute to the goals of the Plan.

In most cases, private interests and benefits do not have to be sacrificed to protect and enhance benefits that accrue to society as a whole. Private landowners generally have an affinity for the land and want to "do the right thing" in caring and managing for that resource and asset. Through increased outreach and education, landowners can gain a greater understanding of their stewardship opportunities and how management and protection of their open space can help them achieve more of their desired ownership objectives while meeting shared community goals as well. New or improved open space incentives can catalyze action on newfound knowledge and understanding of the land. Technical assistance and positive reinforcement such as favorable tax policies, cost sharing and other programs at the federal, state and local levels can act as strong incentives to promote public interests and have been shown to elicit greater private investments in land conservation and stewardship. These positive, proactive approaches can be an effective and cost-efficient means to promote the conservation and viability of open space. When open space retention and sustainable resource management can be an affordable or profitable proposition, landowners will actively support this land use and resist incentives to convert their open space to other uses.

#### **SPECIES AND HABITATS OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED**

In New York, our varied geology creates habitats that support a rich species diversity that is part of our natural heritage. Unfortunately, in many parts of the State, the loss and fragmentation of habitat has been a cause of decline of many native plants and animals. Therefore, protection of habitat through open space planning is a key strategy in securing the future of this biological diversity. The 2016 priority project list identifies projects that will help sustain species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) as identified through state conservation planning processes.

The importance of habitat connectivity is critical and needs the cooperation of state agencies, conservation groups, biologists, and local experts to identify and protect lands essential to habitat

connections, providing corridors through valleys among key areas, such as the Catskill Mountains, Vermont's Green Mountains, the Tug Hill Plateau, the Algonquin Park in Canada to the Adirondack Park, and lands along water courses. Such areas of continuous protected forest will be necessary, as global warming forces some species to move northward or upward to adapt, especially vulnerable boreal and cold-water species.

**THREAT TO BIODIVERSITY: INVASIVE SPECIES**

Early in the 20th century, chestnut blight arrived in North America and has since wiped out the American chestnut, one of the most valuable trees in our forest. Zebra mussels arrived here from their native Caspian Sea in the late 20th century and have altered ecosystems, clogged pipes, and ruined bathing beaches in some of our largest waters. Near the start of the present century, West Nile virus, transmitted by mosquitoes, came here from Africa and has harmed both birds and humans. The Asian longhorn beetle (ALB) arrived within the lumber used for packing crates and has forced the removal of thousands of prized shade trees in our cities and suburbs, with the hope that ALB infestation can be stopped from spreading into our forests.

Invasive species are non-native species that can harm the environment, native plant or animal species, the economy or human health. Only habitat loss is a greater threat than invasive species to biodiversity. Biodiversity refers to the array of natural communities, ecosystems, and landscapes within which species evolve and coexist. Invasive species come from around the world, and the rate of invasion is increasing as international trade and travel increase.

Invasive species have caused many problems in the past, are causing problems now, and threaten our future. Many species create problems for numerous sectors of our world. Our ecosystems are becoming increasingly damaged. Our food supply, including not only agriculture but also harvested wildlife, fish and shellfish, is being impacted. For example, lampreys are preying on fish in Lake Ontario. Our built and cultural environments, including landscaping, infrastructure, industry, gardens, and pets, are also being affected. In addition, invasive species have implications for recreation and for human health, such as the recent spread of Lyme disease-carrying ticks on mice sheltering from predators in spine-covered Japanese barberry bushes, which are not consumed by deer and are largely inaccessible to predators.

**What is Biodiversity?**

Biodiversity is also known as biological diversity. Some people associate the term with endangered species, while others consider it a measure of the number of kinds of animals found within a given area. Both are correct, but each is only part of the concept.

Biodiversity is a natural system of all species—plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms—the habitats where they live, and the broader landscape. Living organisms interact with the non-living environment to create a self-sustaining system, which continues to work and provide beneficial services to human communities as long as its components—species, habitats, and landscapes—are healthy. (*Conserving Natural Areas and Wildlife in Your Community: Smart Growth Strategies for Protecting the Biological Diversity of New York's Hudson River Valley*, 2008)

**ACTIONS**

- **Continue to support partnerships, events and program that engage volunteers in the stewardship of our natural and cultural resources.**
  - Build on the success of I Love My Park Day to encourage year round volunteer stewardship of OPRHP and DEC managed lands.
  - Implement DEC's new Volunteer Stewardship Program (replaces Adopt A Natural Resource Program), which provides volunteers with better protections.
- **Consider future funding needs, stewardship expenses and local real property tax implications when proposing state land acquisition in fee or easement as a tool for land conservation. Support implementation of recommendations of State-sponsored watershed and basin action plans, including those for New York's ocean region, Great Lakes Basin, Hudson River Estuary, Mohawk Basin, Long Island Sound, Lake Champlain, and Susquehanna-Chemung Basins.**
  - Design and promote training workshops for state and local government officials and employees, non-profit staff and the general public on ecosystem-based management (EBM), as well as provide specific information on the benefits of EBM, including economic, environmental, cultural and societal benefits.
- **Support achievement of the goals of the *Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2015-2020*.**
- **Combat Invasive Species**
  - Implement the 2005 recommendations in the Final Report of the New York State Invasive Species Task Force and support the activities of the Invasive Species Council established by law in 2008.
  - Support local invasive species-related partnerships or Partners for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs).
  - Conduct field surveys for priority invasive species, and populate comprehensive statewide databases, such as iMap Invasives.
  - Implement management actions to reduce the extent of existing invasive species populations, when feasible.
  - Develop and implement invasive species emergency response plans for priority species.
  - Develop and implement regulations to reduce the introduction and spread of invasive species in commerce.
  - Encourage research on priority invasive species.
  - Conduct public outreach and education initiatives to bridge research, management and policy.
  - Encourage the use of federal and state funding sources available for combating invasive species, such as NRCS' Environmental Quality Improvement Program and DEC's Aquatic Invasive Species grants.
- **Steward New York's Natural Resources**
  - Maintain certification of state forests through the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

## PROTECTING, USING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Continue the preparation of master plans to guide the management and development of State Parks and incorporate ecosystem-based management.
- Improve land management capability to provide sufficient dedicated positions in state and local government agencies for managing their public open spaces, and provide initial EPF stewardship funding at the time of acquisition for immediate parcel needs such as boundary marking, debris removal, and proper public access.
- Educate landowners on the benefits of green infrastructure and low-impact development, and encourage implementation of these technologies.
- Promote private forest owner participation in New York's Forest Stewardship Program.
- Continue and enhance incentive programs for private landowners to maintain high quality grassland and early successional forest habitats and implement sustainable forestry practices.
- **Continue to assess forest stewardship outcomes on private lands by maintaining the Stewardship Analysis Project and its attendant geo-database to focus limited program resources on those lands exhibiting the highest potential for stewardship outcomes.**
- **Support implementation of recommendations of the 2015 State *Wildlife Action Plan*.**
  - Continue to support state, local and non-profit acquisition of or easements on priority habitats for SGCN; sites that contain Significant Natural Communities identified by the NY Natural Heritage Program; and Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats identified by the NYS Department of State's coastal program.
  - Integrate aquatic conservation objectives into NYS road planning and maintenance work within the Adirondack Park. Work in partnership with the Adirondack Nature Conservancy and NYS-DOT to develop GIS tools that delineate the most important aquatic and adjacent upland habitats for SGCN, as well as the most critical barriers for restoration.
  - Improve aquatic connectivity through remediation of obsolete dam and culvert obstruction for fish and other aquatic organism passage. Removal of priority barriers will help to increase aquatic connectivity and improve success of native and naturalized fish species and other aquatic organisms. Both in-stream and riparian habitat improvement will also aid in the viability of maintaining these important species in our region.
  - Work to identify and protect lands critical to wildlife habitat connections throughout the state, including the southern Lake Champlain Valley, the Black River Valley, northwest from Adirondack Park to Ontario's Algonquin Park, the Mohawk Valley and along water courses. Areas of continuous protected forest will be especially critical as climate change forces some species to move northward or upward to follow their climate "envelopes" and puts boreal and cold-water species at risk.
  - Continue and enhance incentive programs for high-quality grassland and early successional forest habitats.
  - Protect and enhance riparian buffers to provide important habitat and travel corridors.
- **Habitat Protection**
  - Advocate for a plan that restores natural conditions and habitats to Lake Ontario, while

- attenuating possible flood impacts.
- Prepare recovery plans for endangered species, and evaluate the feasibility of restoring extirpated species.
- Prioritize inventory on our rare plants, animals, and significant natural communities identified as SGCN. Maintain and update a comprehensive database on the locations and status of our most imperiled animals and plants and significant natural communities.
- Produce on-line conservation guides that provide biological and conservation information on NY's rare species and communities.
- Gather existing data on the baseline condition of habitats and species, population trends, and projections of impacts from climate change to draft adaptation strategies, monitor impacts, and mitigate expected impacts.
- **Work to update and modernize the current Forest Tax Law Program, 480-a, incentive to encourage private land owners who practice sound forest management for timber products but who also retain their lands in forest, flood plains and other open space.**
- **Promote the use of the EQIP Forest Conservation cost share program provided by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and assisted by DEC Forestry staff. Continue to make the case for additional funding for this valuable program.**
- **Recognize and early successional forest conditions and the benefits derived from these conditions.**
- **Develop a formal statewide program that encourages forest landowners to seek professional technical assistance and advice before undertaking a timber harvest**
- **Consider other programs, voluntary or regulatory, that would encourage or mandate the use of a professional forester and/or a trained and certified logging contractor during timber harvesting activities.**
- **Facilitate logger training in basic scientific forestry principles, low-impact harvest practices and BMPs, to reduce stand damage and protect soil productivity**
- **Implement DEC's Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer in New York State 2012-2016.**

## **Preserving Our Scenic, Historic and Cultural Heritage**

The archaeological, scenic, historic and cultural resources of our State provide residents and the country with tangible reminders of the importance of our region's rich and varied heritage. Whether they are rural communities, urban streetscapes, historic working landscapes, or archaeological sites, the presence and knowledge of such resources provide a community and its citizens with continuity and context for their daily lives and contribute to the overall quality and enjoyment of life. They also can give our communities unique characteristics and a special sense of place, fostering pride in the places where we live.

The "cultural landscape" created by our historic and cultural resources provides a context for land preservation that goes beyond natural resources and helps strengthen the case for open space

protection. Using our landscape as inspiration, Hudson River School painters created a uniquely American appreciation for nature, and New York has been in the vanguard of the environmental movement ever since. The collective efforts to protect our resources are an important part of our heritage in New York and the policies within this plan will help our state live up to that legacy.

#### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Preservation of New York's historic places contributes to the cultural values of New York and its citizens. The ability to understand our past, through experiencing it at an historic site, provides all New Yorkers with an appreciation of their diverse cultural heritage and an ability to deal with the present day and the future. Ever since the Legislature designated Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh as an historic site in 1850, creating the first publically owned historic site in the nation, New York State has recognized the importance of preserving historic resources. Thirty-five historic places are operated as State Historic Sites by OPRHP. New York is also home to 4 National Heritage Areas, 28 National Natural Historic Landmarks, 268 National Historic Landmarks and 22 National Parks.

#### **PRESERVING OUR STATE'S INDUSTRIAL AND WATERFRONT HISTORY**

The rezoning of industrial sites along waterfronts gives us an opportunity to memorialize the industrial age in many of New York's cities. A model for this is the implementation and development of High Line Park, which uses elevated and abandoned rail lines to create a striking public amenity on Manhattan's West Side. By marrying existing historic buildings and structures with open space and recreational uses, our waterfront and maritime history could be approached in the same creative manner.

For example, the former Brooklyn Navy Yard, located in Kings County, was once known as America's premier shipbuilding facility. It was purchased by the City of New York in 1967. Today, the Navy Yard operates as a thriving industrial park, with more than 40 buildings, 230 tenants and 5,000 employees. As it undertakes the Yard's greatest expansion since WWII, the Brooklyn New York Development Corporation (BNYDC) is pursuing its mission to create and retain industrial jobs in New York City with a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and the celebration of the Navy Yard's rich history ([www.brooklynnavyyard.org](http://www.brooklynnavyyard.org)).

#### **PRESERVING OUR STATE'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

As our archaeological database is finite in nature, many areas of our State contain no prehistoric sites to tell future generations the story of important segments of our past. Being listed in either the National or State Register provides only limited protection. Additional protection is needed through management agreements, conservation easements, deed covenants, permit conditions or acquisition to assure long-term protection. In addition, looting of important or artifact-rich sites, particularly human burial sites, in public and private ownership has become a serious problem. Existing legislation protecting such resources is outdated and weak compared to federal law and the laws of neighboring states.

Archaeological sites require protection because of their religious, cultural, educational or historic values. They must be protected from disturbance when changes are made in the use of the land, and guarded against pilferage and unauthorized collecting. Information on these sites is in the care of the State Museum, DEC and OPRHP. OPRHP coordinates statewide historic preservation efforts and administers state-owned historic sites and facilities. The New York State Museum maintains an inventory of archaeological sites.

The protection, preservation, appropriate use and management of the rich, archaeological, historic and cultural resources on the land and under the waters of New York State are integral parts of our responsibility to safeguard our unique historic and cultural heritage.

### **ACTIONS**

- **Preserve our Scenic, Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage**
  - Encourage the training of park, historic site and land managers in best management practices for protection of natural and cultural resources, as well as for operation and maintenance of facilities to ensure public health and safety.
  - Engage park managers in developing a sustainability plan identifying long-range goals and best management practices for park and historic site operation, maintenance, and management, and provide benchmarks for measuring success.
  - Support the Natural Heritage Trust and Legislative Assistance Programs that seek to expand the provisions of recreation services and resource protection.
  - Encourage the listing of buildings sites and districts, both urban and rural, on the State and National Register of Historic Places.
  - Encourage the establishment and effective operation of municipal landmark and architectural review commissions.
- **Educate government officials and developers about the value of historic properties and mechanisms for protecting them.**
- **Provide increased training and technical assistance to local government planners and decision-makers to aid in their efforts to identify and protect historic resources.**
- **Improve and expand the interpretation of historic resources to improve public understanding and appreciation for these resources.**
- **Accelerate the process of identifying and recognizing historic, archaeological and cultural resources worthy of preservation, and increase the use of eligibility determinations to the State and National Register of Historic Places for resource protection purposes.**
- **Continue to develop a Geographic Information System to include properties identified as being eligible for listing on either the state or national register. (Listed properties are already mapped.)**
- **Develop a predictive model for identification of archeological sites.**
- **Increase efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic properties, especially archaeological sites**

that already are in public ownership.

- Modernize state laws relating to the protection of historic, archaeological and cultural resources on public land from vandalism and looting.
- Maintain and add to existing Shipwreck and Hulk Database. Develop a shipwreck identification, protection and public access program modeled after the federal Abandoned Shipwreck Act, including underwater historical parks and preserves.
- Provide for the management and protection of unmarked human burials and cemeteries.
- Use the Unique Areas provision of the ECL (Article 54, Title 3) and the State Nature and Historical Preserve to acquire historic resources, particularly archaeological sites, for long-term preservation.
- Consider a state tax credit paralleling the federal investment tax credit for certified rehabilitations, which would provide an incentive for private investment in income-producing cultural resources.
- Prevent the loss of historic resources through deferred reassessments of appropriately rehabilitated residential properties. Combined with investment tax credits, this would give new life to older urban centers.
- Define an existing historic use as the “highest and best use” for tax assessment purposes to ease pressure on owners to opt for development.
- Encourage the participation of land trusts and groups, such as the Archaeological Conservancy, in the protection of historic resources, and improve cooperation of state agencies with such groups.
- Expand the use of innovative mechanisms such as easements, cooperative agreements, stewardship programs and volunteer stewardship programs to protect historic properties eligible for or listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places.
- Develop a systematic and prioritized approach to acquiring resources to be added to the State Historic Site system to reshape it to be more reflective of the scope and depth of New York State's history and culture.



## CONCLUSION

On both the state and national level, we are facing historically difficult financial times, which result in budget constraints. Accordingly, full funding for the many programs discussed in this Plan may not be available. Yet the benefits of open space conservation are so important to our quality of life, and to preserving irreplaceable ecological systems, that to the fullest extent possible, funding should be continued, and, as circumstances change, funding should be restored and expanded. This is evident in Governor Cuomo and the state legislature making the historic investment in New York's environment by nearly doubling the state's EPF funding in the 2016-17 budget.

While state land acquisition is the statutory foundation of this Plan (see e-Appendix B – Legislative Mandates) and remains a major demand on funding needs for open space conservation, other conservation tools must be equally considered and used for us to be successful in protecting New York's magnificent open spaces.

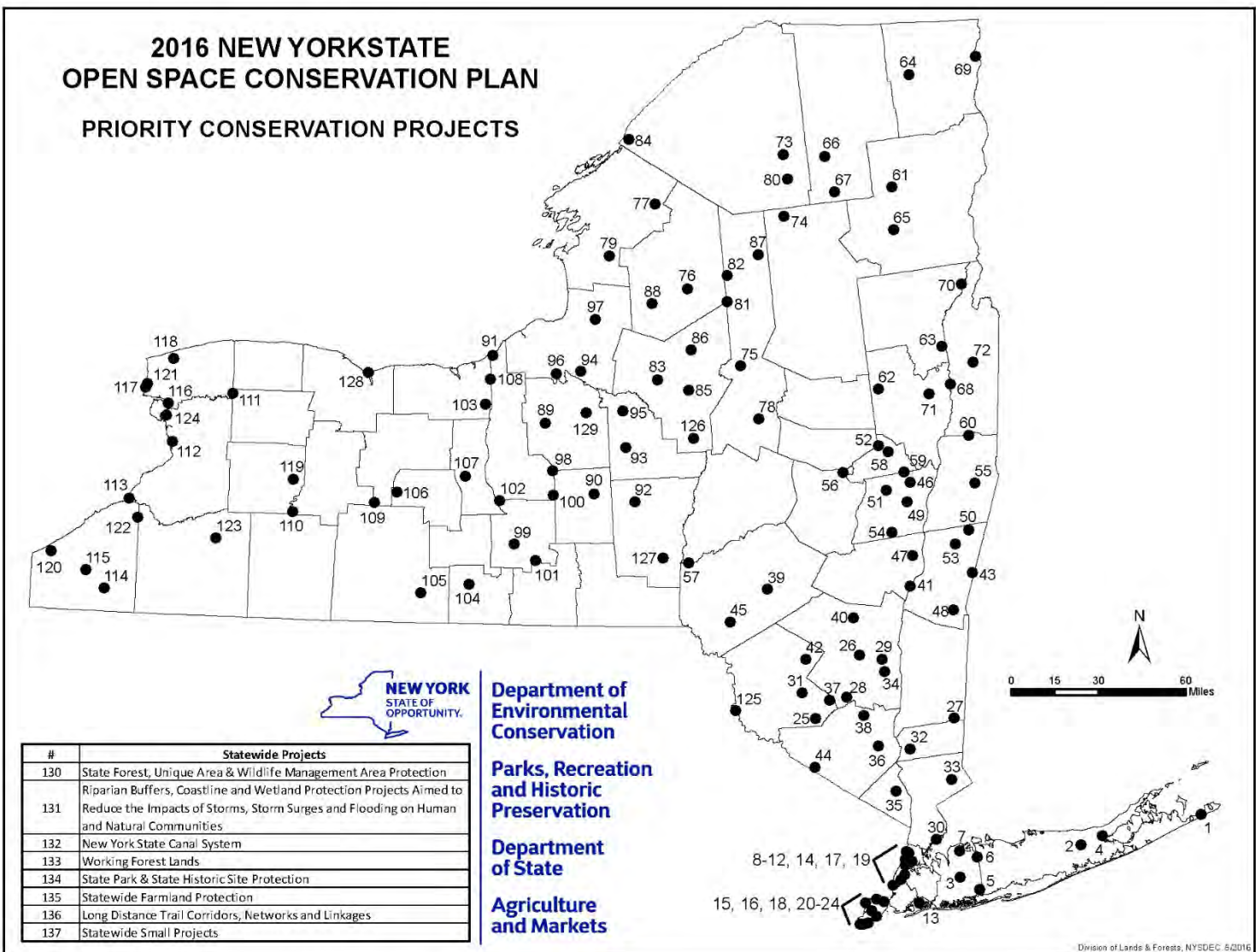


REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

2016 NEW YORK STATE GOVERNMENT-MANAGED LANDHOLDINGS

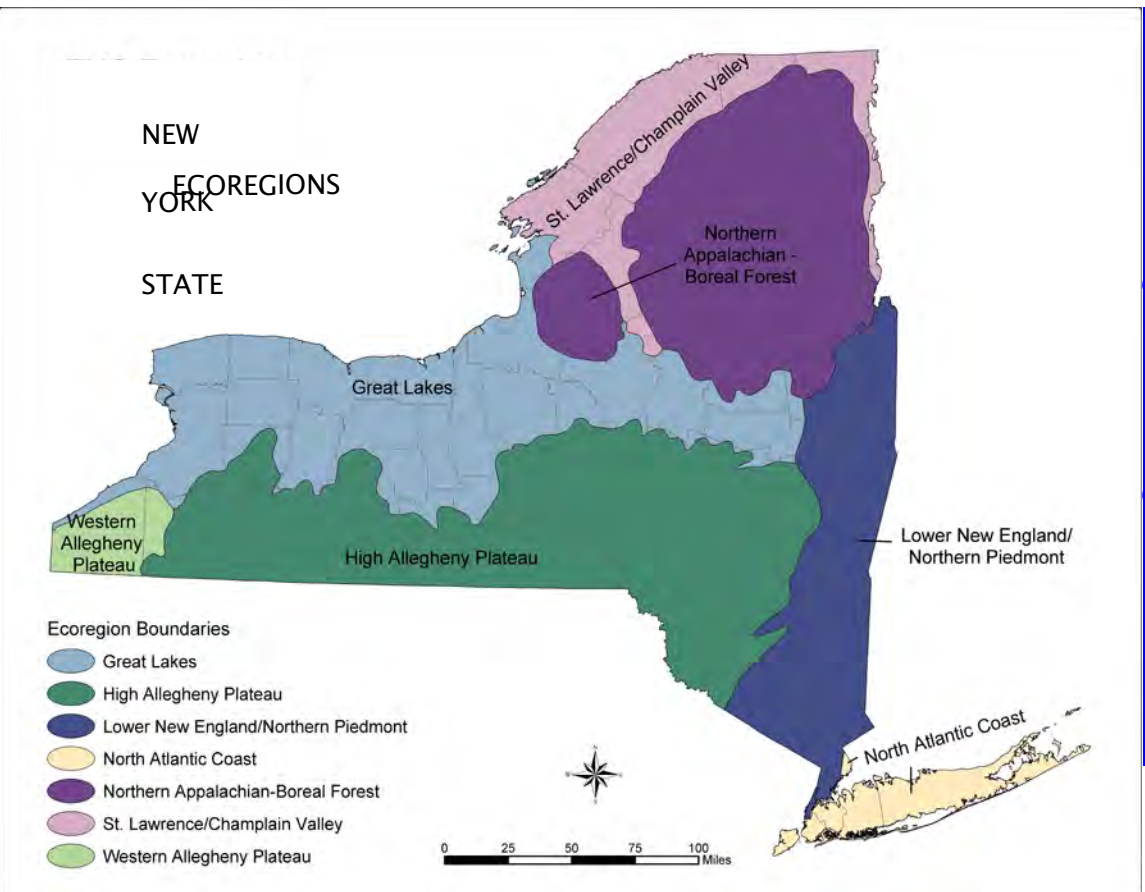
Managing Government Agency	ACRES (Rounded to Nearest Thousand)		Additional Information
DEC	Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve State Forest Wildlife Management Areas Other DEC Lands Conservation Easements	2,940,000  797,600 202,000 4,100 917,000	DEC Regional Offices and Central Office <a href="http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html">www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html</a>  <i>Recent DEC land acquisitions:</i> <a href="http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5069.html">http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5069.html</a>
OPRHP	State Parks (180) Historic Sites (35)	334,000 7,000	OPRHP Regional Offices and Central Office <a href="http://nysparks.com/">http://nysparks.com/</a>
Thruway Authority	Canal Corporation	22,000	NYS Thruway Authority NYS Canal Corporation 200 Southern Blvd., Albany, NY 12201 <a href="http://www.nyscanals.gov/index.html">www.nyscanals.gov/index.html</a>
Federal	Recreation Lands Non-Recreation Lands	95,000 165,000	US Fish & Wildlife Service 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035 <a href="http://fws.gov/northeast">http://fws.gov/northeast</a>  Finger Lakes National Forest 5218 State Route 414, Hector, NY 14841 <a href="http://www.fs.usda.gov/fingerlakes">http://www.fs.usda.gov/fingerlakes</a>
Local	County City/Village Town	109,000 158,000 174,000	Appropriate County Clerk See New York Protected Areas Database: <a href="http://www.nypad.org/">http://www.nypad.org/</a>
NYC Watershed	Fee Conservation Easement Total	88,316 49,956 138,272	NYC Department of Environmental Protection <a href="http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/watershed_protection/index.shtml">http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/watershed_protection/index.shtml</a> (December 31, 2015)
Agriculture and Markets	Farmland Protection - held by local governments (e.g., Purchase of Development Rights)	59,510	NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets <a href="http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/farmprotect.html">http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/farmprotect.html</a> (December 31, 2015)
<b>Total NYS Land Acreage</b>	<b>31,106,541</b>	<b>6,260,754</b>	<b>Total Government-Managed Landholdings</b>

# Priority Projects Map



## Ecoregions Map

The identification of seven (7) distinct ecological systems or “ecoregions” within New York State will assist DEC in achieving a more unified ecosystem-based approach to managing our state’s natural resources. For more information on ecoregions, see the [www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/item1847.html](http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/item1847.html).



New York State Ecoregions  
Identified by The Nature Conservancy (TNC)



# REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

## NEW YORK STATE'S REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The following conservation projects have been identified through the nine Regional Advisory Committees (Committees) and public comments received through the Open Space Conservation Plan's (Plan) review process. It represents the unique and irreplaceable open space resources of New York that encompass exceptional ecological, wildlife, recreational, scenic, and historical values. The identification of these projects is a result of extensive analysis of our state's open space conservation needs by the Committees, in consultation with DEC and OPRHP staff. These projects are filtered through a wide spectrum of professional expertise found on each of the Committees through a consensus-based process.

Each of DEC's nine administrative regions is represented by a Committee consisting of members appointed by the DEC and OPRHP commissioners, and by each of the counties within each region. Members are knowledgeable about open space conservation, and represent municipal government, conservation not-for-profits, forestry and agricultural interests and recreational user groups such as sportsmen and women. Each committee submits a report containing recommended priority conservation projects for their region, and advice and recommendations on policies and priorities, studies and assessments, the consideration of economic impacts, the ecological value of projects, and other relevant matters.

Committee reports can be found in the Plan's electronic Appendix A. Information on the identification process of priority projects can be found in the Plan's electronic Appendix B and C. Appendices are located on DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/98720.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/98720.html).

## NEW YORK STATE'S PRIORITY OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Since the development of the state's first Open Space Plan in 1992, the list of conservation projects has grown from 75 to 140. Many of these projects involve conservation work that has gone on for decades and which will require work far into the future. Though much work is ahead, the increase in number of projects is indicative of the broad public support that exists throughout New York for an open space conservation program, and for the many environmental and economic benefits such a program delivers to its communities.

Priority projects included on this list are eligible for funding from the state's Environmental Protection Fund, and other state, federal and local funding sources. For most of the project areas identified, a combination of state and local acquisition, land use regulation, smart development decisions, land

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

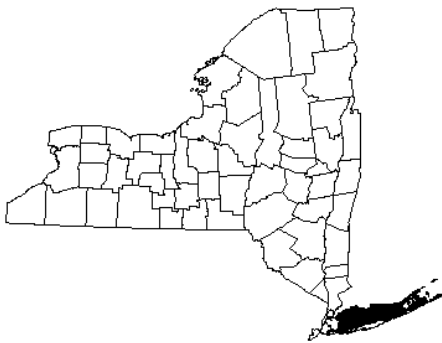
owner incentives and other conservation tools used in various combinations, will be needed to succeed in conserving these open space resources for the long term. Many of the priority project areas are large and will require a balance between conservation and compatible, natural resource-sensitive economic development.

### Species of Greatest Conservation Need

As New York's varied geology creates habitats that support a rich diversity of species, many of these habitats are being fragmented and lost to development, causing a decline of many of the state's native plants and animals. Protection of habitat through the open space planning process is a key strategy in securing the future of the state's biological diversity. The Plan identifies projects that will help sustain habitats for species of greatest conservation need, which have been identified through the state's conservation planning process.

- {#} Refers to the location identified on **Regional Priority Conservation Projects** map.
- ◆ Refers to priority projects which support **Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)** as identified in New York's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Plan.
- ^ Refers to critical **Important Bird Areas (IBA)** identified by Audubon NY (National Audubon Society) through a global partnership led by BirdLife International: Fort Edward/Washington County Grasslands IBA (Region 5); Calverton Grasslands in the Long Island Pine Barrens IBA (Region 1); St. Lawrence Valley IBAs (Region 6), Point Peninsula, Perch River Complex, Lisbon Grasslands, Indian River/Black Lakes IBAs; Tug Hill IBAs (Region 6); and Niagara River Corridor IBA (Region 9).

## REGION 1 /LONG ISLAND



Long Island is only about 21,000 years old, a 118-mile long wrack line of glacial till left behind at the end of the last ice age. The terrain reads like an earth science text book. Rocky beaches hugging the coastal moraine on the north shore, followed by a swale of fertile inland rising to a second moraine down the center of the Island, descending to a sprawling glacial plain and white sand beaches on the Atlantic Ocean coast. Because it is situated at the biogeographical range limit for many northern and southern species of flora and fauna, Long

Island is the most species diverse region in the State. Some preserves have the highest ratio of rare species to land area in the State. This beautiful Island supports farming, a vibrant fishing industry, world class outdoor recreation and tourism that contribute to both the Long Island and New York State economy. It also sits atop its sole source aquifer which provide drinking water to it nearly 3 million residents. It's a lot of special packed into a little place.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

To read the Region 1 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

**ATLANTIC COAST {1.} ♦^** – Acquisition of coastal parcels for active and passive recreation, habitat and endangered species protection, coastal resiliency and mitigation of the effects of sea-level rise due to climate change. Representative projects include:

- **Barrier Islands:** Parcels on the barrier islands protecting Long Island's south shore from the Atlantic Ocean, including Long Beach Island and Fire Island. Of special concern are lots fronting the Atlantic Ocean that are susceptible to erosion and flooding from wave action and storm surge.
- **Montauk Moorlands:** East Hampton: Suffolk. Consolidation of public ownership, two parcels totaling 52 acres and fronting the Atlantic Ocean for shoreline and habitat protection and public access.

**CENTRAL PINE BARRENS {2.} ♦^** – Acquisition of vacant land within the legislatively designated boundary of the Central Pine Barrens (ECL 57-0101(11)). Available, privately owned parcels within the Core and Critical Resources Areas (CRA) should be acquired, as well as select projects in the Compatible Growth Areas (CGA). Representative projects include:

- **Carmans River Watershed:** Brookhaven: Suffolk. Parcels within the newly expanded Central Pine Barrens legislative boundary that now encompasses the Carmans River watershed, consistent with the Town's "Carmans River Conservation and Management Plan."
- **South River Road Additions:** Brookhaven: Suffolk. Parcels in single ownership bounded by the Peconic River on the north, Nugent Drive on the south and DEC's South River Road parcels on the east and west, for consolidation, preservation and greatly expanded recreational opportunities.
- **Pine Ridge Preserve:** Brookhaven: An 800-acre parcel of highly intact pine barrens forest containing significant habitat for rare Lepidoptera (coastal buckmoth) and several NYS natural heritage ranked species. Remarkably free of invasive plant species.
  - **Calverton Grasslands:** Riverhead: Suffolk County. Parcels totaling 800 acres, including 565 acres at Enterprise Park at Calverton (EPCAL), comprising the largest contiguous grassland habitat on Long Island and one of the most significant in the state.
  - **Southampton Pine Barrens:** Southampton: Suffolk County. Core, CRA and CGA parcels to maintain the hydrological and ecological integrity of the area.

**LONG ISLAND SOUND {3.} ♦^** – Acquisition of open space within the boundaries of the federally designated Long Island Sound Estuary, including Sound-front and watershed parcels. **Acquisitions protect ground and surface water quality, improve coastal resiliency, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and support water-based industry and tourism.** Representative projects include:

- **Mitchell Creek Wetlands:** North Hempstead: Nassau County. Tidal and freshwater wetlands draining to Manhasset Bay for erosion control, habitat protection and linkage to the Shoreline-to-Shoreline Trail running from Manhasset Bay to Hempstead Harbor.
- **Sagamore Hill Additions:** Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Parcels flanking Sagamore Hill National Park on the Cove Neck peninsula, most fronting Oyster Bay or Cold Spring Harbor.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- Shu Swamp Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Land adjacent to Shu Swamp, a Class I freshwater wetland within the Oyster Bay Special Groundwater Protection Area (SGPA) and habitat for several threatened and rare species.
- Kate Trubee Davison Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Open space connecting the Trubee Preserve, City of Glen Cove parkland and Village of Lattingtown wetlands.
- Manhasset Bay Access: North Hempstead: Nassau County. Parcels fronting Manhasset Bay in Port Washington, providing new opportunities for public access to the water.
- Oyster Bay Harbor: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Land surrounding Oyster Bay Harbor to support the state's largest oyster fishery, provide recreational opportunities, and increase coastal resiliency.
- Glenwood Landing: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Eight-acre waterfront property on Hempstead Harbor, including woods, sandy open space, and almost four acres of underwater land adjacent to Tappan Beach Town Park.
- Eaton's Neck: Huntington: Suffolk County. A single 452.5-acre parcel on the Eaton's Neck peninsula, with over a mile of shoreline and excellent coastal habitats.
- Seminary Property: Huntington: Suffolk County. A single 225-acre parcel adjoining Caumsett State Park, with extensive frontage on Lloyd Harbor, including high-quality tidal wetlands, coastal forest and grassland habitat.
- Nissequogue River Corridor: Smithtown: Suffolk County. Parcels adjoining state land in this scenic and recreational river corridor, including the 116-acre St. Johnland property, to consolidate public holdings, protect river and Long Island Sound water quality and increase recreational water access.
- Flax Pond: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. A heavily wooded 6-acre parcel with 300 feet of frontage on Flax Pond, adjoining Flax Pond State Tidal Wetlands.
- Conscience Bay Watershed: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. A 3-acre Class I wetland and stream and a 17-acre wooded property adjacent to Patriot's Hollow State Forest in the zone of capture for nearby public water supply wells.
- Wading River Assemblage: Riverhead: Suffolk County. Sound- and river-front parcels and wetlands within the watershed totaling 500 acres in Wading River, including land owned by Little Flower Children Services and the Boy Scouts of America.
- Key Span: Brookhaven and Riverhead: Suffolk County. An 893-acre property in Shoreham and Wading River with 1 mile of Sound frontage and 2,000 feet along Wading River Marsh.
- Nassau County 4H: Riverhead: Suffolk. A 138-acre property in Roanoke, providing opportunities for access to Long Island Sound, camping, environmental education and passive recreation.
- North Bergen Avenue Sound-front: Southold: Suffolk. Ninety-five acres of woods and meadow in Mattituck, with over 2,100 feet of bluff frontage on the Sound.
- Goldsmith's Inlet/Peconic Dunes Additions: Southold: Suffolk. Assemblage totaling 165 acres east of Henry's Lane in Peconic, between CR48 and the Long Island Sound, including freshwater wetlands and trail linkages within the Southold SGPA.
- Plum Island: Southold: Suffolk. Failing transfer to USFWS for a federal preserve, the undeveloped portion of Plum Island, 600-700 acres, for wildlife habitat, shoreline preservation and protection of significant cultural resources.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

**PECONIC PINELANDS MARITIME RESERVE {4.}** ♦^ – Acquisition of open space within the legislatively designated boundary of the Peconic Pinelands Maritime Reserve (Article 57 ECL), an interconnected area encompassing both the central Long Island Pine Barrens and the Peconic Estuary, a federally designated estuary of national significance. Acquisitions will protect the surface waters of the Peconic Bay and the groundwater of several SGPAs, improve coastal resiliency, mitigate the effects of sea-level rise due to climate change, provide opportunities for land- and water-based outdoor recreation, and preserve high-quality wildlife habitat. Representative projects include:

- **Broadcove: Riverhead: Suffolk County.** A 94.6-acre former duck farm in Aquebogue containing extensive tidal wetlands and shoreline habitat along Terry's Creek and Broad Cove, as well as upland woods and open fields.
- **Riverhead Creeks: Riverhead: Suffolk County.** Parcels fronting or draining to Sawmill Creek, Terry's Creek, Meetinghouse Creek, Reeves Creek and Cases Creek to protect surface water quality.
- **South Fork Wildlands and Groundwater Protection Area: Southampton: Suffolk.** Assemblage of 1,000 acres of nearly contiguous forest in the Tuckahoe Woods, Great Hill, Noyack Hills, and Long Pond Greenbelt regions of the South Fork, including pristine deep flow recharge areas in the SGPA.
- **Corey Creek Expansion: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels fronting and adjacent to Corey Creek and protected Town and County land to consolidate public ownership for better protection of the tidal wetland resources.
- **Pipe's Cove Complex: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels totaling 200 acres to consolidate public ownership in the wetlands complex that includes Arshamomaque Preserve, Moore's Woods, Inlet Pond County Park, Pipes Creek, Pipes Neck Creek and Pipes Cove Bay to protect the largest relatively undisturbed salt-marsh habitat remaining on the North Fork.
- **Hashamomuck Pond: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels totaling 80 acres fronting and within the watershed of the pond and Town preserve, for public waterway access, protection of tidal wetlands and wildlife habitat, floodplain protection and flood hazard mitigation.
- **Orient State Park Viewshed: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels on the south side of Main Road adjacent to Long Beach Bay State Tidal Wetlands and in the viewshed of Orient Beach State Park, to improve coastal resiliency and enhance existing public holdings.
- **East Marion Waterfront: One 19-acre parcel on Shipyard Lane fronting Orient Harbor, including tidal wetlands and a vacant oyster factory, for coastal resiliency, habitat restoration as mitigation for sea-level rise, and new public waterway access.**
- **East Hampton Pine Barrens: East Hampton: Suffolk.** Parcels in the South Fork SGPA near Wainscott and Sag Harbor, atop the most voluminous portion of East Hampton's potable groundwater supply.
- **Camp Blue Bay: East Hampton: Suffolk.** A 171-acre camp fronting Gardiner's Bay in Springs, comprising primarily old fields with stands of red cedar coastal forest. The property's sandy beaches are backed by coastal bluffs rising to 65 feet.
- **Stony Hill Woods: East Hampton: Suffolk.** Nearly 550 acres in northern Amagansett on the glacial moraine, containing old-growth forest and kettle hole ponds, for preservation of wildlife habitat, deep groundwater recharge areas and continuity of the Paumanok Path.
- **Lazy Point Assemblage: East Hampton: Suffolk.** Small parcels totaling 25 acres adjoining Napeague State Park, for public access, trail linkage, and dune protection within the 100-year floodplain.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

**SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE {5.} ♦^** – Acquisition of open space within the boundaries of the state– designated South Shore Estuary Reserve, a 326–square–mile area encompassing south shore bays and their watersheds, for coastal resiliency, mitigation of sea–level rise, water quality and habitat protection, public waterway access and preservation of historic, cultural and maritime resources. Several projects are in the 100–year flood plain and/or Potential Environmental Justice Area (PEJA) communities. Representative projects include:

- Nassau Tributary/Bay Buffer Sites: Hempstead: Nassau County. Waterfront parcels such as the Harbor Isle site (Camp DeBraun was lost to Stop and Shop during the drafting of this report), to buffer creeks and bays from developed areas and increase public access to the water in highly populated and PEJA communities.
- Middle Bay Country Club: Hempstead: Nassau. One hundred forty six acres of private recreational open space in heavily populated Oceanside, with extensive shoreline on Middle Bay entirely within the FEMA 100–year floodplain, great potential for tidal marsh migration. Mud Creek Tributary Wetlands: West Babylon: Suffolk. 11.7 acres woods and freshwater wetland on a tidal creek tributary for coastal resiliency and nature preserve, adjacent to County parkland. Very high water table and FEMA 100 year flood plain.
- Patchogue River Maritime Park: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Small but critical 2.5–acre parcel for much needed public water access in a PEJA community. The site is improved and will require demolition and restoration or redevelopment.
- Forge River at Old Mastic: Land and easements along the Forge River, Poospatuck Creek and Lons Creek, for waterway access, coastal resiliency and water quality protection, including a 4.5–acre parcel on the Forge River owned by Stony Brook University Foundation; adjacent to a PEJA community.
- Mastic–Shirley Conservation Area: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Assemblage of small lots in a 500–acre wetland complex on the Great South Bay. Exceptional habitat as well as critical flood protection to the low–lying communities of Mastic, Mastic Beach and Shirley in the 100–year floodplain.
- Carll’s River Watershed Addition: Babylon and Huntington: Suffolk. Small parcels at the headwaters of the Carll’s River, north of Belmont Lake State Park in the PEJA communities of North Babylon and Wyandanch.
- Haven’s Point Additions: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. An eight–acre parcel adjacent to DEC’s tidal wetlands in East Moriches, to enhance public access and buffer the wetlands and Seatuck Cove from residential runoff.
- Shinnecock Bay: Southampton: Suffolk County. Parcels in the back–barrier salt marsh between the Villages of Quogue and Southampton, including open water, dredge islands and intertidal flats critical for fish and shellfish, waterfowl, migratory shorebirds, rare plants and federally listed sea turtles.

**SPECIAL GROUND WATER PROTECTION AREAS {6.}** – Acquisition of vacant land and conservation easements within the nine Special Groundwater Protection Areas identified in the 1992 Long Island Comprehensive Special Groundwater Protection Area Plan. The protection of land within SGPA

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

boundaries is directly linked to the long-term health of Long Island’s drinking water supply.

Representative projects include:

- Whitney Estate: North Hempstead: Nassau. One 325-acre parcel and several small parcels comprising the last large tract of undeveloped land in the Town, located in the North Hills SGPA and containing four water supply wells.
- Old Westbury Gardens Enhancement Area: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Several parcels totaling more than 300 acres in the Oyster Bay SGPA anchored by Old Westbury Gardens, a 160-acre privately operated historic site and nature preserve.
- Route 25A Heritage Area: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Assemblage of parcels along Route 25A in the state-designated Long Island North Shore Heritage Area and the Oyster Bay SGPA, to preserve historic resources in addition to the drinking water supply.
- Planting Fields Arboretum Additions: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Parcels totaling over 600 acres near or adjoining Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park in the Oyster Bay SGPA.
- Tiffany Creek Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Parcels adjacent to the Preserve in the Oyster Bay SGPA, encompassing two water district wells, spring-fed ponds, old-growth woods, and habitat for migratory songbirds, several turtle species and tiger salamanders.
- Wade: Babylon: Suffolk. Agricultural easement on a 20-acre property currently farmed but already subdivided for development, in a deep recharge area of the West Hills/Melville SGPA and within the South Shore Estuary Reserve.
- Camp Kaufman/USDAN: Babylon and Huntington: Suffolk. A 500-acre parcel in Wheatley Heights (PEJA) and Half Hollow, to protect a major drinking water well less than 100 feet down the gradient in the West Hills/Melville SGPA. The Camp lies within the boundaries of the South Shore Estuary Reserve and adjacent to the Motor Parkway r-o-w.
- Pineridge Park and Additions: Huntington: Suffolk. One-hundred-sixty-two acres in the West Hills/Melville SGPA, adjacent to Old Bethpage Village Restoration and Bethpage State Park, characterized by oak-mixed heath forest, low bush blueberry and sandy soils.
- Oak Brush Plains State Preserve: Huntington: Babylon, Islip, Suffolk. In accordance with Chapter 635 of the Laws of 1987, any land deemed surplus at Pilgrim State Hospital on which natural vegetation may be reasonably restored; located in the Oak Brush Plains SGPA.
- Laurel Lake Additions: Southold: Suffolk. Key parcels in the Southold SGPA totaling nearly 120 acres, for consolidation of public lands resulting in better protection of the drinking water supply.

**TRAILS and GREENWAYS {7.}** – Acquisition of land along foot, bike and equestrian trails and greenways, to provide non-motorized travel corridors for people and wildlife and to link recreational, natural and cultural attractions. Representative projects include:

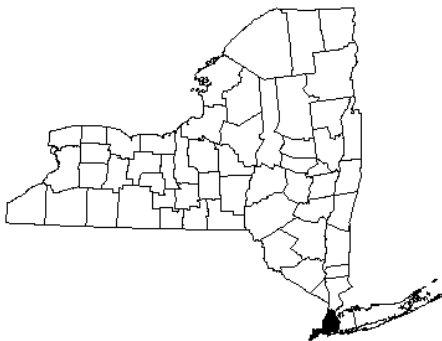
- Shoreline-to-Shoreline Trail: Hempstead, North Hempstead: Nassau County. Land and trail easements along a 12-mile trail corridor crossing the Port Washington peninsula, from the western shore of Manhasset Bay to the eastern shore of Hempstead Harbor.
- Hempstead Harbor Shoreline Trail System: North Hempstead: Nassau County. Land and trail easements, to create an interconnected system of trails around Hempstead Harbor linking 21 communities.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- Muttontown Preserve Trails: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Parcels adjoining the Preserve, to prevent fragmentation of a heavily used horse and foot trail system in the Oyster Bay SGPA and containing rare plants, tiger salamanders, and glacial kettle-hole ponds.
- SUNY Old Westbury Trails: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Parcels adjoining the SUNY/Old Westbury Campus, to maintain connectivity of popular horse and foot trails and protect groundwater recharge areas in the Oyster Bay SGPA.
- Trail View State Park Additions: Oyster Bay and Huntington: Nassau and Suffolk. Parcels to buffer and enhance this linear state park that runs from Bethpage State Park to Cold Spring Harbor State Park.
- Long Island Motor Parkway Trail: Multiple Towns: Nassau and Suffolk: Dedication of the old Motor Parkway right-of-way as parkland plus acquisition of additional parcels, to create a historic and recreational trail from Queens to Lake Ronkonkoma.
- Glacial Ridge Trail: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Linkage and buffer parcels along this five-mile trail, which runs east-west along the Ronkonkoma terminal moraine between Brookhaven Town Hall and public land on the Carmans River.
- Shore-to-Core-to-Shore Trail: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Land and easements to complete this north-south trail from the Long Island Sound to the Great South Bay Terrells River County Preserve, linking several state and county preserves along the way.
- Peconic River Greenway: Riverhead: Suffolk County. Land and trail easements along the Peconic River Trail, providing public access to the State Scenic and Recreational River and trail linkage to heavily used Stotsky Park in a PEJA community.

## REGION 2/NEW YORK CITY/5 BOROUGHES



Although it may look solidly urban on a map, New York City has a surprising amount of green space in its many parks and coastal wetlands. The serpentine rock that makes up part of Staten Island is a geologic historical marker from the days when North America and Europe collided hundreds of millions of years ago. More recent natural history in this area is represented by an ecological transition zone which represents the northern limit of many southern tree species, such as willow oaks. And it is here where the Hudson River finally meets the sea. Evidence of

humans dominates the landscape, yet where human endeavors have been abandoned, vegetation has gently reclaimed the area. A surprising number of heron rookeries exist in wetlands and on uninhabited islands, and there is much more wildlife than many people realize. Open green space is precious in a major urban area where land prices are often calculated in terms of square feet and remains vital to the wellbeing of the millions of people who use and often treasure this space.

To read the Region 2 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

### WATERFRONT ACCESS

#### *BRONX*

**MOTT HAVEN–PORT MORRIS WATERFRONT {8.}** – The Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront Plan is consistent with three re–zonings on adjacent land, as well as the Vision 2020 NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. It provides a logical solution to climate change effects on the Significant Maritime and Industrial Area (SMIA) located within flood zones, and it gives the underserved community access to designated open space to counteract health consequences caused by an oversaturation of highways and truck–intensive businesses. The plan consists of the following interconnected projects: Bronx Kill Waterfront Park, Park Avenue Boat Launch/Waterfront Park, Lincoln Avenue Waterfront Park (with Alexander Avenue Extension), East 132nd Street Pier, Historic Port Morris Gantries and a waterfront connecting path.

**BRONX RIVER GREENWAY {9.}** – Creation of a greenway/trailway along the Bronx River from 172d Street to Hunts Point Riverside Park and Soundview Park. This corridor, using on–street greenway connections in the interim while opportunities for direct waterfront parcel acquisitions are achieved, will connect with the existing 17–mile greenway/trailway to the Kensico Reservoir in Westchester County.

- **City Island Wetlands** – A vacant Bronx shorefront area in its natural state with significant wetlands will also provide public access to the waterfront.
  - **City Island Gateway** – Located just east of the City Island Bridge, this private parcel is waterfront property that faces Pelham Bay Park and Orchard Beach to the north, and would make an outstanding site for a community boat launch.
- **Putnam Railroad** – A greenway through the northern Bronx using an abandoned railroad Right of Way (R.O.W.)
  - **Daylight Tibbets Brook** – New Addition. Extending from Van Cortlandt Park along the Putnam Line to the Harlem River, this will create a greenway/bluebelt pathway connecting and interconnecting existing state trailways to other greenways.
- **Hudson River Greenway** – Acquisition of College Point, a parcel on the Hudson River in the northern Bronx. The preferred route for the Hudson River Greenway will include 3.8 miles of Hudson River waterfront. Acquisition of this land will provide the only public park stop along the Greenway in the Bronx.

#### *BRONX/NEW YORK*

**HARLEM RIVER WATERFRONT {10.}** – The public access objective for the Harlem River area is to provide pedestrians and cyclists with opportunities to enjoy both banks of the river through expansion of waterfront parks and creation of a continuous pathway within the city–wide greenway system. Bronx and Manhattan parks and greenways will be connected by existing bridges, including the non–vehicular historic High Bridge.

**BRONX HARLEM GREENWAY {11.}** – The five–acre Spuyten Duyvil/Penn Central Triangle properties could provide waterfront access at the junction of the Hudson and Harlem rivers as well as wetlands

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

preservation opportunities; the CSX-owned and city-owned parcels north of Fordham Road offer connection to the future Putnam Greenway; the 3.7-acre Fordham Landing property at the end of Fordham Road is a vacant, privately owned parcel that could provide additional waterfront parkland in an under-served community, with a waterfront greenway connection south to Roberto Clemente State Park; redevelopment of the waterfront areas at the south end of Roberto Clemente State Park would further extend waterfront parklands and greenway along a particularly scenic portion of the Harlem River Valley (facing Manhattan's Highbridge Park) south to the Washington and Hamilton bridges. This priority project also includes expanding the greenway southward alongside High Bridge Yards to connect with points south along the Mott Haven and Port Morris waterfront areas.

**MANHATTAN HARLEM RIVER GREENWAY {12.}** – Four privately owned industrial lots along the Harlem River in the Inwood section of Manhattan would form a waterside promenade with fishing access.

### QUEENS

**JAMAICA BAY PROTECTION AREA {13.}** ♦^ – A premier coastal habitat, including important marine and terrestrial ecosystems and a bird sanctuary, under the primary stewardship of the National Parks Service and Gateway National Recreation Area. Located in Brooklyn and Queens, it is also an important element in the Atlantic flyway. The area includes, but is not limited to the following parcels and other resources identified in the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan:

- **Hook Creek** – A freshwater creek and uplands within a large, city-owned tidal wetland in Queens.
- **LILCO Property at Beach 116<sup>th</sup> Street** – A large upland parcel that includes waterfront access.
- **Sea Girt Avenue Wetlands** – Tidal wetlands and ponds at the eastern end of the Rockaway peninsula.
- **Spring Creek/Fresh Creek** – A freshwater creek on the Brooklyn/Queens border.
- **Brant Point** – Parcels adjacent to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation's Brant Point Wildlife Sanctuary, identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*, published by the Trust for Public Land and New York City Audubon Society in 1992; would help consolidate and buffer the City's preserve and provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Dubos Point** – Shoreline adjacent to the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation's Dubos Point Wildlife Sanctuary along Jamaica Bay, identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*; would help consolidate and buffer already protected City-owned land and provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Mott Peninsula** – Shoreline parcels on Jamaica Bay that were identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*; would help provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Norton Peninsula** – Shoreline parcels on Jamaica Bay between NYC's Rockaway Community Park (former Edgemere landfill) and Bayswater Point State Park, identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*; would help consolidate already-protected state and city land, and provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Northeastern Queens Shoreline** – Unique and critical natural resources areas representing some of the last contiguous coastal habitats in this area.
- **Udall's Cove** – A tidal wetland preserve connected to Long Island Sound through Little Neck Bay.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Udall’s Ravine** – A ravine and stream corridor that are part of a larger wetland ecosystem.

### *KINGS/QUEENS*

**BROOKLYN/QUEENS EAST RIVER WATERFRONT {14.}** – Open spaces and proposed greenways along the 20-mile waterfront from the Brooklyn Army Terminal to the Astoria Power Station will provide diverse and under-served neighborhoods with waterfront access and recreational opportunities. Properties include, but are not limited to:

- **Private properties needed to complete Bushwick Inlet Park**
- **Hallets Marina, Vernon Boulevard**
- **Con Edison, Northern Hunters Point**
- **The Grain Elevator Property**
- **Bush Terminal Piers (government-owned parcels)**
- **Williamsburg Bridge Park** (pending the relocation of existing City facilities)

### *RICHMOND*

**GREAT KILLS HARBOR – NELSON AVENUE WATERFRONT ADDITION {15.}** – Approximately four acres of wooded natural land near the waterfront to expand Nelson Seaside Park. The barrier and shoreline of the Great Kills harbor is under primary stewardship of the National Parks Service.

-----  
**HARBOR HERONS WILDLIFE COMPLEX {16.}** ♦ ^– This wildlife complex includes tidal and freshwater marshes, a pond, and creeks located on the west and north shores of Staten Island. The complex also includes four islands in New York Harbor. Together, these support the largest breeding population of colonial water birds in the northeastern United States.

- **Graniteville Swamp/Old Place Creek** – A diverse 30-acre swamp forest which includes a wide range of habitats, a tidal marsh, a cattail marsh, and freshwater ponds, as well as feeding grounds for egrets and other wading birds (The New York/New Jersey Port Authority expressed concern regarding inclusion of this property on the priority list in relation to its plans for Goethal's Bridge).
- **Merrill’s Creek** – A tidal wetland system north of Saw Mill Creek on the Arthur Kill.
- **Saw Mill Creek** – Tidal and freshwater marsh complex adjacent to Prall’s Creek; includes critical habitat for state-threatened species.
- **Gulfport Marsh and Uplands** – Freshwater and tidal wetlands cover about 240 of the 625 acres of this parcel, a combination of two parcels previously known as the GATX and Duke Energy parcels and now known as the 380 Development site. The site provides nesting and foraging habitat for several significant species. It also provides some important open grassland habitat and a “corridor,” or link, between Saw Mill Creek and Old Place Creek. Because the site includes a dock area that was used in the past, and may provide maritime access in the future, it may be appropriate to establish a corridor for access to that dock to accommodate some future water-dependent use on the eastern portion of the site near Gulf Avenue.
- **Little Fresh Kills** – A portion of 60 acres of upland and marsh buffering the shore against urban development can be protected by acquisition or conservation easement.
- **Neck Creek** – Tidal marsh area off the Arthur Kill.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Cable Avenue Woods** – Patchy wet and upland forest community of 28 acres threatened by imminent development.
- **Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve Additions** – Located adjacent to Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve. Northeastern Woodland and Englewood Boundary Tract sites would provide additional buffer for the Park and protect it from development.
- **Blazing Star** – Located off Arthur Kill Road, this approximately 12-acre property consists of shipwrecks, mud flats, salt marsh, upland woods, and an historic cemetery. It provides significant habitat for many species of birds.
- **Sharrotts Road Shorelands** – An approximately 17-acre site consisting of woods, salt marsh and mudflats along the Arthur Kill. Tappens Creek, which originates in Clay Pit Pond State Park Preserve, flows through the property. A field of sunken barges lies off the shoreline, providing wildlife habitat.
- **Ellis Road** – A 57-acre property site.
- **Outerbridge Shorelands** – This approximately 30-acre site consists of forested upland and tidal wetland shoreline along the Arthur Kill, north and south of the Outerbridge Crossing.
- **Kriescher Cove** – This property consists of woodland, salt marsh and mud flats along the Arthur Kill. It provides habitat for colonial waterbirds, songbirds, amphibians and reptiles. Originally, the site included approximately 25 acres of open space, but much of it has been developed. There remains a 6-acre parcel in its natural state.
- **Port Mobil Swamp Forest and Tidal Wetlands** – This site consists of approximately 50 acres of forest with rare blackjack oak, persimmon and river birch, and ponds and shoreline surrounding Exxon Mobil's tank farm along the Arthur Kill. The property provides significant habitat for amphibians and reptiles.

**INNER CITY/UNDER-SERVED COMMUNITY PARKS {17.}** – This project will provide open space and recreational opportunities in densely populated urban areas with limited or no open space resources.

- **Con Edison 15<sup>th</sup> Street Ballfields** – A much-valued recreational resource, now in private hands, in an under-served area of Manhattan near the East River.
- **Greening Gray Neighborhoods** – Several vacant lots that would provide much needed green space in the communities of Harlem, Hunt's Point in the South Bronx and Bushwick, Brooklyn.
- **Jones Woods Playground Addition** – Wooded six-acre hillside with scenic views in an under-served neighborhood.
- **Travers Park Expansion** – The site of the Queens Borough Toyota Car Dealership located at 77-12 Northern Boulevard in Jackson Heights, Queens, in a community that is greatly under-served for open space.
- **Nicholas Avenue** – Nine and one-half acres, including some freshwater wetlands, located in the Port Richmond section of Staten Island.

### LONG POND {18.} ◆

- **Long Pond** – A 90-acre natural wetland area on Staten Island; features knob and kettle topography and a diversity of habitats.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **MIV Triangle** – This five-acre parcel (block 6765, lot 1) located in Richmond County on Raritan Bay, would enhance public access to the Raritan Bay shoreline.

### NEW YORK CITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION SITES {19.}

- **Brinkerhoff Cemetery** – Site of an old Queens family cemetery in Fresh Meadows.
- **Commandant's House** – Located in Kings County on Little Street, within the former Brooklyn Navy Yard. This house was built in 1807 and is currently on the National Register and New York City Landmarks List.
- **Klein Farm** – Located in Queens County at 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 194th Street. The Klein Homestead was the last privately owned working farm in New York City. It remains an important vestige of Queens County's primarily agrarian past.
- **William H. Cornell Farmhouse** – Located in Little Neck, Queens, the site includes approximately 1.3 acres with a house and barn, plus outbuildings on an additional .25 acre on Little Neck Parkway.

**NORTH SHORE WATERFRONT GREENWAY {20.}** – This greenway, using a potential bicycle path route and existing and possibly future new open space areas, would create a continuous public waterfront pathway along the Kill Van Kull, from the area of Bay Street Landing, around the Staten Island Ferry, past Snug Harbor, to the area of Goethal's Bridge. This would provide for waterfront access and an added recreation element along the north shore of Staten Island.

**STATEN ISLAND BLUEBELT {21.}** – Located on the South Shore of Staten Island, this area serves as an alternative stormwater management system that incorporates existing streams and wetlands. Protecting these areas for stormwater conveyance will obviate the need for many miles of expensive sewer construction and provide aesthetically pleasing parks and greenways.

- **Richmond Creek Acquisitions** – A major drainage corridor; part of a freshwater wetlands system.
- **South Beach Northern Wetlands** – Sixty-five acres of former salt marsh that provide local flood control and wildlife habitat and would enlarge the scope of similar adjacent state land.
- **Oakwood Beach Bluebelt** – Various parcels located in the southeast section of Staten Island that would be appropriate for inclusion in the NYC Department of Environmental Protection's program for alternative stormwater management, using existing streams and wetlands, involving reduction in impervious surfaces, increased groundwater recharge and improvements to local habitat.

**STATEN ISLAND GREENBELT {22.}** ♦ – One of the largest urban nature preserves in the United States, this 2,500-acre natural area contains unique woodlands, wetlands, glacial ponds, open fields and one of the last remaining intact watersheds in New York City. The Greenbelt is a haven for wildlife and many migratory bird species.

- **Pouch Camp** – A large contiguous parcel containing the northernmost portion of the Greenbelt Watershed Preservation Area.
- **Reeds Basket Willow Swamp** – A heavily wooded, environmentally sensitive site located at the base of a steep ravine; contains streams and a vernal swamp.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

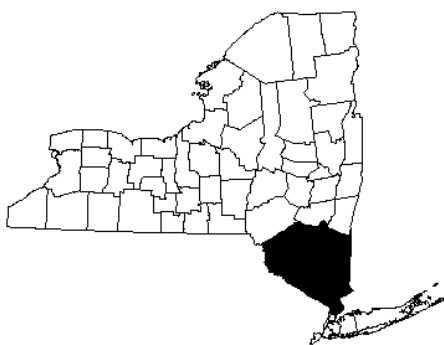
- **Great Swamp Forest Hill Greens** – This wooded slope would provide a buffer between a housing development and a protected freshwater wetland.

**STATEN ISLAND WET WOODS {23.} ♦** – Moist hardwood forest in southern Staten Island that forms an intermediate community between maritime shrub forest and forested uplands. These properties contain ponds, streams, and wetlands, and include:

- **Arden Heights Woods Additions** – An addition to a 183-acre wildlife sanctuary.
- **Blue Heron Park Additions** – Freshwater wetlands and wildlife habitat; contiguous with an existing city park.
- **Canada Hill Forest** – Thirty-three acres of scarce “Sandy Ground” oak barrens buffering mapped freshwater wetlands.
- **Corson’s Brook Woods and Woodlands** – Undeveloped portion of former Willowbrook State School under the ownership of the state through the *NYS* Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, a 30-acre, west-facing wet woodland and uphill, adjacent 15-acre semi-mature woodland.
- **Outerbridge Ponds** – These 14 acres of pine-oak barrens and sedge ponds represent ecosystems rare in New York City.

**STATEN ISLAND NORTHSORE GREENBELT {24.}** – Goodhue, a.k.a. The Children’s Aid Society, located in northeast Richmond County. This approximately 42-acre site consists of woods and freshwater wetlands and forms a link with Allison Pond and Jones Woods to Snug Harbor. Twenty-three acres remain under threat of development.

## REGION 3/LOWER HUDSON VALLEY



With the lower Hudson River valley, the Hudson Highlands, the Palisades, Shawangunk Ridge, the Catskill Mountains, the flats of the Wallkill River and the Taconic range, the Lower Hudson Valley has an extremely diverse natural landscape. This region, including the Upper Hudson Valley or Capital Region (Region 4), is rich in wildlife habitat with 22 significant habitat types that support species of greatest conservation need (SGCN ♦). \*It is also a remarkable historic landscape, which has evolved from the importance of the Hudson River as a natural corridor into

New York's interior. Some of the most spectacular scenery of the Hudson River is found at the bend through the mountains of the Hudson Highlands—scenery which has given the Hudson the nickname “the Rhine of North America.” Lower Revolutionary War sites, enormous river estates with castle-like mansions and the remnants of many former industries are testimony to the rich human history of the area.

\*2006 NYSDEC Conservation Framework

To read the Region 3 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

**BASHAKILL WETLAND SYSTEM {25.} ♦^** – The Bashakill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) consists of over 3,000 acres in the southeastern portion of Sullivan County in the Town of Mamakating. It runs along the western base of the Shawangunk Mountain Ridge and NYS Route 209 to the west and is the largest freshwater wetland in southeastern New York State. It is bisected by NYS Route 17/Future I-86. In the 2008 Sullivan County Open Space Plan, this area is designated as the priority area for biodiversity protection and is also designated as an Important Birding Area by the National Audubon Society and as a New York State Bird Conservation Area. Significant development pressure along Rt.17/Future I-86 and Rt.209, Sullivan County, threatens the water quality, vital habitat and scenic viewshed of the 3,000-acre Basha Kill Wetland area, as well as increased emissions from vehicular traffic, increased noise, and greater habitat fragmentation/disruption from future development. The area is home to over 200 species of birds, 30 varieties of fish, and 40 types of butterflies, as well as scores of plants, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and insects. Federally protected species call this area home, as do other endangered and threatened species and species of special concern. The surrounding valley, largely unprotected, is the “gateway to the Catskills” and contains some of the largest intact and globally important forest blocks, with some of the highest incidences of amphibian diversity in the state. Those lands that make up the viewsheds directly north of Route 209 and west of Route 17, and that extend directly west of the Bashakill WMA and north of Route 209, should be protected as should those properties within the Pine Kill Creek Corridor for habitat protection and flood prevention.

### Priority areas include:

- **Water Quality/Quantity:** Development pressure along the NYS Route 209 corridor, as well as runoff from the Shawangunk Ridge and tributaries, including the Pine Kill, have a significant impact on this important eco-system. Also an important wetland system, it serves as a stormwater retention area that helps slow down and contain floodwaters, while recharging groundwater supplies.
- **Trail linkages:** The Basha Kill wetland system lies among several trail systems that should be enhanced and linked to. These include the O&W Rail Trail, D&H Canal Towpath, the Shawangunk Ridge Trail, and the Long Path trail system that links Sullivan County to the larger region. Also improving linkages to other publicly owned lands in the region would be beneficial to promote and expand access.

**GREAT RONDOUT WETLANDS {26.} ♦** – Several large, mostly unprotected wetlands occur in the Rondout River watershed in the Ulster County Towns of Marbletown, Olive, Rochester and Wawarsing. Acquisition and/or easement projects should be pursued to protect these unique and important habitats. Most of these wetland areas contain unique or rare species or communities, and most are surrounded by extensive tracts of undeveloped forest land that could also be acquired as buffer areas. In addition, these areas often constitute a critical connection between the conservation areas in the Catskill and the Shawangunk Mountains. *Conservation efforts should focus on the following areas:*

- **Great Pacama Vly:** When considering biodiversity in the Catskill region, this wetland stands out as being a critical area in need of protection. Encompassing approximately 315 acres at the intersection of the Towns of Marbletown, Olive and Rochester, the Great Pacama Vly is the only site in the Catskills where black spruce is known to be found, and it harbors rare species and

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

communities found nowhere else in the state. There is currently a 50-acre parcel of detached State Forest Preserve in the center of the wetland, which should be expanded to include the whole wetland and any buffer areas.

- ***Cedar Swamp***: These forested wetlands, totaling over 800 acres, lie to the east and west side of Dawe Road (also called Brandy Brook Road), south of the east end of the Rondout Reservoir. Perhaps the largest wetland of its kind in the Catskills, it contains trees that are 480 years old, as well as unique and rare communities and species. It is recognized as a unique and important conservation area by the NYS Natural Heritage Program.
- ***Beer Kill Wetlands/Cape Pond***: A large area of wetlands and open water south of Ulster Heights and the Cedar Swamp. Almost 600 acres of marsh areas surround the Beer Kill Creek, which can be canoed, flowing into the west end of Cape Pond. Cape Pond is predominantly undeveloped, with buildings only on the far eastern end. This area hosts a wide diversity of aquatic habitats and has great potential as a WMA, including waterfowl hunting and furbearer trapping opportunities.

**GREAT SWAMP {27.}** ♦^ – One of the three largest wetlands in New York, the Great Swamp (6,000 acres) stretches 20 miles south from the Towns of Dover and Pawling in Dutchess County, through the Towns of Patterson and Southeast in Putnam County. It is the largest and highest-quality red maple swamp in southern New York, but also has diverse habitats and biota associated with its marble bedrock and extensive perimeter and tributary wetlands. Much of the Great Swamp is within the Croton River Basin and flows directly into the East Branch Reservoir, a New York City reservoir, while the rest of it processes water for the north-flowing Swamp River in the Housatonic Basin.

The Great Swamp contains critical habitat for bird and aquatic species—nine of which are rare—protects and purifies the water supply for millions of New York residents, is an aquifer recharge area, moderates droughts, reduces flooding, and provides outstanding educational and recreational opportunities. The parallel north-south Highland ridges constrain the Great Swamp and funnel migratory birds through its exceptional stopover habitat. This topography also provides critical northward dispersal opportunities for biota as climate warming accelerates. However, because it is located only 60 miles north of Manhattan, development pressures are intense, making it necessary to safeguard this vital and fragile resource now from further development and associated runoff. To protect the unique habitat of the Great Swamp, the diverse range of wildlife it supports, its scenic value, and its critical function of water purification, *both* the wetlands and the surrounding uplands must be conserved. The extensive wetland edge of the elongated Great Swamp increases its vulnerability, as well as the challenge associated with conservation action. Nearly all the Great Swamp's 63,000-acre watershed has been identified by the USDA Forest Service as one of several Highlands Conservation Focal Areas, where three conditions coincide: a large contiguous tract or major cluster of (undeveloped) land; a high-priority composite conservation value; and an absence of permanent protection.

**HUDSON VALLEY/NEW YORK CITY FOODSHED {28.}** – With its prime agricultural soils, thousands of working farms, abundant transportation connections, and accessibility to Albany, New York City, and other population centers, farmland in the Hudson Valley comprises a vital component of the New York

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

City/Hudson Valley “Foodshed,” an area with the potential to serve the growing demand for fresh local foods in the region. In addition to conserving the specific agricultural areas identified elsewhere in the Region 3 list of Priority Projects, protecting prime farmland soils throughout the Hudson Valley will help meet growing demand for locally produced food, enable the region’s agricultural economy to grow, and bolster the food security of the New York City metropolitan region and the Hudson Valley. Conserving the region’s farmland, which represents nearly 20% of the region’s land base, also will help conserve wildlife habitat and the region’s rural character.

Agriculture is an integral part of Region 3’s identity and is a source of cultural pride. These working landscapes represent some of the most materially threatened open space resources. Active, viable agricultural operations not only ensure open space, but also often provide undeveloped buffer areas to waterways in valley bottoms, reducing runoff and slowing down overland flow during rain events, both of which ameliorate flooding and erosion risks.

The New York City/Hudson Valley foodshed includes significant clusters of prime agricultural soils and productive farms. Some of these are highlighted in Scenic Hudson’s June 2013 report *Securing Fresh, Local Food for New York City and the Hudson Valley: A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region*. Others have been identified in county farmland protection plans and by local experts.

**Priority farmland clusters include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- **The Wallkill River Valley of Orange and Ulster counties**, including productive farmland in the Towns of Crawford, Gardiner, Goshen, Minisink, Montgomery, New Paltz, Newburgh, Plattekill, Wallkill, Warwick, and Wawayanda. (See Orange County Open Space Plan, July 2004: [www.orangecountygov.com/filestorage/124/1362/1462/4586/4592/Chapter\\_IIC\\_Agriculture.pdf](http://www.orangecountygov.com/filestorage/124/1362/1462/4586/4592/Chapter_IIC_Agriculture.pdf))
- **The Moodna Creek in Orange County** is flanked by hundreds of acres of farmland clustered within the Towns of Cornwall and Blooming Grove, where highly productive agricultural soils are found. The Woodbury Creek corridor is also actively farmed. Farms are varied and range from orchards to livestock farms. This agricultural landscape contributes greatly to the scenic and ecological value of the area.
- **The Rondout Valley of Ulster County**, including important farmland in the Towns of Wawarsing, Rochester, and Marbletown, and the “Catskill–Shawangunk Greenway” area in Wawarsing, which would link the Catskill Forest Preserve with the Shawangunk Ridge, including farmland owned by the State of New York Department of Corrections and Community Services;
- **The Ulster County “Fruit Belt”** of Marlborough and Lloyd, a region of unique soils and micro-climate that make this a prime area for the cultivation of grapes, stone fruit crops, apples and vegetables.
- **The Esopus Creek Watershed/Sawkill – Esopus Creek Corridor**, which includes areas with rich agricultural soils whose conservation would additionally help to prevent or mitigate flood damage to downstream communities, protect portions of the City of Kingston reservoir system, and continues northward through the Bokoven and Kiskatom valleys, before entering Greene County. It also includes prime agricultural soils and floodplain lands of the scenic east–west Beaverkill and Little Beaverkill valleys.
- **Dutchess County’s important agricultural areas**, as identified on the *Agricultural Priority Areas* map in the county’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The map can be found on page 47 of the plan, which can be found at the Dutchess County Cooperative Extension website at

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

<http://ccedutchess.org/perch/resources/2015-dutchess-county-agricultural-and-farmland-protection-plan.pdf>.

- **Sullivan County's important agricultural areas** include areas within the Delaware River Highlands, the New York City Watershed Lands, the Catskill Unfragmented Forest, the Catskill River and Road Corridors, and the Lower Neversink River Valley. For more detailed information on agricultural priority areas within Sullivan County, please see *Conserving Open Space & Managing Growth: A Strategy for Sullivan County, NY*. (<http://co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/DepartmentsNZ/PlanningandEnvironmentalManagement/OpenSpaceProtection/tabid/3749/Default.aspx>).
- **Westchester County's Agricultural District** includes over 100 farms and 7,000 acres of land, including successful equine operations, vegetable and fruit crops, and livestock operations that are in high demand and economically viable. The highest priority for farmland protection in Westchester is the farmland in the Croton Watershed in the northern part of the county, a key drinking water supply for New York City and the county. This is where the greatest convergence of multiple public benefits exists: scenic character, blocks of farmed land and protection of drinking water quality. Much of the growth in production agriculture within Westchester is generated from smaller scale Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations or commercial farms of similarly small scale, mostly located on leased properties. Should development pressures increase, significant efforts will be needed to protect them. In particular, high priority should be given to conserving the 155-acre Stuart's Farm in Somers, the oldest working farm in Westchester County, which has been in the same family since the 1750s and has a clear family succession plan. It was awarded recognition as a New York Century Farm in 1972 and is part of one of the most important protected wildlife corridors in the county. In addition, it is an important resource in protecting the water quality of the Croton Reservoir system.
- **Rockland County's important agricultural lands** include four remaining active farms. These farms represent Rockland's remaining link to agriculture, producing corn, squash and several varieties of apples. Thousands of New York City residents come to pick their own apples each year. Where landowners are willing, efforts should be made to ensure protection of these farms from development.

**KARST AQUIFER REGION {29.}** – The Karst Aquifers are situated in a narrow band of carbonate rocks that extend through Ulster County, generally trending south-southwest through portions of the Towns of Saugerties, and Ulster, the City of Kingston, and the towns of Esopus, Marbletown, Rosendale, Rochester and Wawarsing, and into the Sullivan County Town of Mamakating and the Orange County Town of Deerpark. Additionally, similar bands dominate portions of the landscape in the Towns of Goshen, Minisink, Warwick and Wawayanda in Orange County. This landscape feature is characterized by caves, sinkholes, mines, springs, lakes and disappearing streams. The area is rich in biological, geological and historical resources, and provides diverse outdoor recreational opportunities and critical water reserves. In many locations, outcroppings and ridges are very visible from roads and community centers and could have important scenic value to local communities and visitors. Several scenic byways,



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

heritage trails, and bike trails have been designated within and within sight of this region and would benefit from permanent protection of their viewsheds.

**LONG ISLAND SOUND COASTAL CORRIDOR {30.} ♦^** – The corridor extends along Westchester County's marine shoreline from the Bronx River Parkway east to the Connecticut border on Long Island Sound. The area includes, but is not limited to, an array of natural and historical resources and public access and recreation opportunities on Long Island Sound, including those recommended in the Long Island Sound Coastal Management Program, Local Waterfront Revitalization programs and DEC's *Marine Recreation Fishing Access Plan*. Representative sites within this area include but are not limited to: Edith Read Buffer, David's Island and Huckleberry Island.

- **Edith Read Buffer:** Also known as Manursing Island, this 14-acre area is important for protecting the Edith Read Wildlife Sanctuary in Westchester County.
- **Huckleberry Island:** Lying northeast of New Rochelle Harbor in Westchester County, the island serves as a waterfowl refuge.
- **David's Island:** Located in the City of New Rochelle, Westchester County, this 120-acre island property (77.8 acres above water) on the Long Island Sound is characterized by a shoreline of tidal wetlands and approximately 125 buildings in various states of deterioration. Restoring public access to the island and establishing areas of protected open space would provide a unique recreational opportunity, enhance the quality of the Long Island Sound, and protect an exceptional piece of open space in a densely developed portion of Westchester County.

**LOWER NEVERSINK RIVER VALLEY {31.}** – This area encompasses the Neversink River from when it leaves the Neversink Reservoir and runs south through Sullivan and Orange counties to its confluence with the Delaware River. This “eco-region” contains significant natural attractions and resources, hunting and fishing opportunities and wildlife habitat (including bald eagle nesting areas), as well as many scenic viewsheds and recreational opportunities. It is also inundated with seasonal flooding, and efforts should be made to preserve the floodplain along the Neversink River to accommodate floodwaters and to protect habitat and infrastructure. Existing and proposed trail linkages should be focused on, including but not limited to the D&H Canal and the O&W Rail Trail, as well as linkages with other priority areas, including the Catskill River & Road Corridors, Shawangunk Mountains, Basha Kill Wetland System, Upper Delaware Highlands and the Catskill Park. Conservation efforts should include the following:

- **Tomsco Falls:** A Sullivan County area attraction consisting of beautiful waterfalls, hemlock forest, meadows/lawn, viewing areas, two buildings, and rail bed with a former trestle site. The 200-plus acre property also includes significant access to Sandburg Creek, an excellent trout fishing stream. This site would also help create a connection between the Shawangunk and Catskill regions. Several miles of the old O&W railroad bed offer great opportunities for multiple-use trail linkages.
- **Neversink Gorge vicinity:** The Neversink River Unique Area in Sullivan County consists of the 4,881-acre Neversink River Unique Area and the 585-acre Wolf Brook Multiple Use Area. It encompasses a portion of the Neversink River that flows through a narrow channel and over beautiful waterfalls. Opportunities still exist to greatly expand the Unique Area to include a large wetland and

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

headwater stream area to the east, unfragmented forest lands to the west, open areas to the south, and forested lands to the north to Holiday Mountain Ski Area along Rt.17/Future I-86. New additions would provide better public access.

- **Harlen Swamp Wetland Complex:** There are several mapped and regulated wetlands located on the border of the Towns of Thompson and Mamakating, Sullivan County (between Wild Turnpike and County Route 56) that together provide important habitat for a variety of wetland species. Several large, undeveloped parcels are currently threatened with development in this area. The recent acquisition of approximately 155 acres in the Town of Thompson by the YMCA of Middletown/Sullivan County for the purpose of creating an environmental education camp suggests there is an opportunity to conserve habitat and other open space values on the property.

**NEW YORK HIGHLANDS {32.} ♦^** – The Highlands are a unique physiographic region running through the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. The USDA Forest Service has analyzed and documented this area as a high priority for conservation efforts, and the federal Highlands Conservation Act of 2004 (reauthorized in 2015) codifies its status as a “nationally significant landscape,” with federal funding authorized for further conservation protection. The New York Highlands are characterized by forested ridges, rocky outcrops, pristine streams and wetlands, special geologic features, and exceptional scenic vistas. They are located in the densely populated New York metropolitan area. They provide and protect water for millions of New York and New Jersey residents.

The Highlands contain numerous state-owned historic sites, State Parks, DEC management units and State Forests, and NYC Watershed Lands. These public resources are not only ecological jewels and critical habitats, but they are also recreational destinations and economic catalysts. Hundreds of thousands enjoy these public resources annually, and they inject funds into local economies and support jobs. West of the Hudson River, these public resources include Sterling Forest, Harriman, Bear Mountain, Storm King Mountain, Goosepond Mountain, and Schunemunk Mountain State Parks. East of the Hudson River, public resources include Hudson Highlands, Clarence Fahnestock Memorial, FDR, and Wonder Lake State Parks, NYC East-of-Hudson watershed lands, and DEC areas, such as Mount Ninham, the Great Swamp, and Cranberry Mountain.

The Highlands also contain preserves and habitat owned by non-profit organizations and private entities, including the Open Space Institute, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Scenic Hudson, and Black Rock Forest Consortium. These lands, many of which are open to the public, protect thousands of acres of habitat and numerous important species, and provide important connections to state and agency-owned properties.

Priority will be given to connections of existing protected lands on both sides of the Hudson River and to the creation of a corridor comprising State Parks, DEC lands and other lands that span the length of the Highlands in New York. These preservation efforts will also provide additional protection for the Shawangunk and Taconic Ridges, the Great Swamp, and NYC Watershed Lands which lie within and adjacent to the Highlands. Priority also will be given to lands identified as Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (New York State Department of State), Biologically Important Areas (BIA—NYSDEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program), Critical Environmental Areas, and Audubon-designated

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Important Bird Areas. Some of these designated areas in the Highlands include the following estuarine and terrestrial BIAs: Fishkill Creek, Moodna Creek, Breakneck Ridge, Constitution Marsh, Con Hook, Camp Smith, Anthony's Nose, and Annsville Creek.

Some of the most important and representative areas within the New York Highlands include but are not limited to:

### *Highlands West of Hudson River*

- **Goosepond Mountain** – Lands adjacent to the 1,650-acre, wooded Goosepond Mountain State Park in Chester, Orange County, are threatened by immediate and intense development pressure. Goosepond Mountain is also part of the Moodna Creek Watershed, which is a biodiversity hotspot.
- **Ramapo Mountains and Watershed** – The Ramapo Mountains are Rockland County's Highlands, and parts of the Ramapos are permanently protected within the 44,000-acre Harriman State Park. The Ramapo River Watershed is an irreplaceable regional water supply, recreational resource and key ecosystem in the Highlands. The Ramapo Valley Aquifer—listed as a federal Sole Source Aquifer in 1992—supplies a third of Rockland County's public water supply and over two-million people derive all or part of their water supply from the Ramapo River Basin. The Forest Service has identified this as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. Of special importance is a large property in the drainage basin of the Nakoma Brook, which is a tributary of the Ramapo River. This property is located in a "High Conservation Value" area identified in the federal Highlands Study of 2002.
- **Greater Sterling Forest** – In Orange County, nearly 20,000 acres of contiguous open space have been preserved through public/private partnerships. Additional targets for protection include holdings and buffers. Continuation of successful preservation efforts in Sterling Forest is critical to maintain the rich biodiversity and diverse habitats this ecosystem and vital watershed provides. Preservation of property on the northern border will add over 300 acres of important buffer lands.
- **Torne Valley** – This area includes historic Torne Mountain and is adjacent to Harriman State Park. The Forest Service has identified this as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. Due to the preservation efforts of Rockland County, Town of Ramapo and Palisades Interstate Park Commission, significant portions of Torne Valley have been preserved. Two remaining undeveloped parcels encompassing 60 acres remain to be protected.
- **Harriman State Park Expansion** – The privately owned lands located adjacent to the NYS Thruway and Harriman State Park in the Towns of Woodbury and Tuxedo, Orange County would expand the northwestern area of the park and preserve a scenic vista from the Thruway.

### *Highlands East of Hudson River*

- **Croton-to-Highlands Biodiversity Area** – The Towns of Putnam Valley in Putnam County, and Cortlandt, Yorktown, and New Castle in Westchester County have been recognized for their high biodiversity value by the Wildlife Conservation Society/Metropolitan Conservation Alliance (MCA). MCA's biodiversity plan, published in 2004, delineates those areas it determined are suitable for development and those areas that contain species vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and should be a priority for acquisition. This area of the Croton Reservoir system has also been identified by the USDA Forest Service as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. Biodiversity areas in this plan,

such as the Teatown Lake Reservation, contain significant biological resources despite occurring in an increasingly stressed landscape. Conservation efforts in this region should focus on the active management of these areas as well as maintaining connectivity with other areas to ensure ecological integrity of the entire region.

- **Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park/Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve/Fishkill Ridge/Scofield Ridge** – Located in the northwest and central portion of Putnam County and the southern edge of Dutchess County, this area contains large blocks of nearly contiguous upland forests, significant reservoirs for several municipalities, and the watershed of the Clove/Fishkill Creek, which is a principal aquifer. The over 14,000-acre Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park in Putnam County, much of which has been undisturbed for over 100 years, offers exceptional ecological and recreational value, and provides habitat for a variety of species, some threatened, that otherwise could not exist in such a developed region of New York State. More than 10,000 acres of the park have been designated as a Bird Conservation Area, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail passes through the park. Fahnestock lies in proximity to Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, which encompasses over 7,000 acres, including Bull Hill and parts of Breakneck Ridge. There are significant undeveloped, upland forest tracts adjacent to and in-holdings within both parks that would enhance and expand the natural resource protection objectives of these areas, and establish linkages with other upland parcels along Breakneck, Scofield and Fishkill ridges. Protection of lands in this ecologically rich area is necessary to provide important linkages, especially between Fahnestock and the northern end of the Hudson Highlands, as well as protect the scenic viewshed of both the Highlands and the Hudson River. The USDA Forest Service has identified this as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. In addition to the region's high conservation value, over 400,000 visitors come to the state parks each year, with Breakneck Ridge consistently rated as one of the most popular hiking destinations in America.
- **Hudson Highlands State Park South/Camp Smith** – This area provides panoramic views across the Highlands and of the New York City skyline. Straddling the Putnam and Westchester County lines, this area is a state-designated scenic area and is a critical viewshed for numerous parks, Revolutionary War historic sites, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail traverses a portion of this area on lands protected by the National Park Service. The southern portion of Hudson Highlands State Park connects the Appalachian Trail to Anthony's Nose and to the Camp Smith Trail extending into Westchester County. Additional opportunities to protect and expand these resources to the east, north and south will further enhance recreational opportunities in this area. The Camp Smith Reservation is a candidate for inclusion in the New York State Nature and Historical Reserve Trust.
- **Northern Putnam Greenway** – Extending from the Taconic Ridge on the east to the Hudson River on the west, this proposed greenway is a necessary connecting step within the Highlands region. It would help maintain the region's ecological integrity by protecting wildlife bio-corridors, preserving scenic viewsheds in an area of high-growth pressure, protecting the purity of the area's groundwater and of the headwaters of the NYC Croton water supply system, and by helping to meet the increasing demand for outdoor recreational and education opportunities. It would allow for completion of the Highlands Trail, creating a connected network of long-distance and local

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

trails. By connecting the following protected properties, the Northern Putnam Greenway can be realized: Ciaiola County Conservation Area – Cranberry Mountain WMA – Great Swamp WMA – Ice Pond Preserve – Wonder Lake State Park – Horse Pound Brook Area – Big Buck MUA – White Pond MUA – Ninham Mountain MUA – Lockwood Pond Area – California Hill State Forest – Boyd Corner North Area – West Branch Headwaters Area – Fahnestock State Park – Hudson Highlands State Park.

**NORTHEASTERN WESTCHESTER WATERSHED AND BIODIVERSITY LANDS {33.} ♦ ^**– The Towns of Lewisboro, Pound Ridge, Bedford, and North Castle in Westchester County contain important public water supply watersheds, covering approximately 23,000 acres, for the Village of Mount Kisco and for Norwalk, Stamford and Greenwich, Connecticut. These watershed lands drain into seven reservoirs and the Silvermine, Rippowam, Mill, and Mianus Rivers. This area includes:

- Approximately one-quarter of the Eastern Westchester Biotic Corridor (EWBC), a regionally important biodiversity area of 22,000 acres defined by the Wildlife Conservation Society/Metropolitan Conservation Alliance. (Approximately three-quarters of the EWBC are encompassed in the Open Space Conservation Plan’s New York City Watershed priority area).
- The 738-acre Mianus River Gorge Preserve, which was the first Natural Historic Landmark designated by the federal government.
- Approximately 2,000 acres of water supply protection lands mostly held by the privately owned company that supplies Stamford’s water.

Acquisition of strategic parcels would further protect public water supplies; keep the EWBC intact and prevent it from being severed from its hub (Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, a 4,700-acre county nature preserve); and provide links to trail networks throughout the area. Voters in each of the four towns approved open space ballot propositions in recent years. In addition, each town has compiled a land protection priority list and has indicated willingness to work with New York State and other funders on acquisition projects.

**PLUTARCH/BLACK CREEK WETLANDS COMPLEX {34.} ♦** – This project encompasses a very large wetland complex and stream corridors in the Ulster County Towns of Esopus, Lloyd and New Paltz, which is important because of its size and variety. It includes the Plutarch Swamp and other nearby wetlands associated with the Swarte Kill and Black Creek drainages, as well as associated uplands for buffers, access and management. These wetlands provide habitat for numerous wetland-dependent wildlife species, including critical habitat for the threatened northern cricket frog. The area is important for breeding and migrating waterfowl and river otters. It includes significant and rare ecological communities, including one of the largest dwarf shrub bog occurrences in the Hudson River Valley and one of the most bio-diverse tributaries to the Hudson River—the Black Creek—due in large part to lack of development. The area also could provide significant recreational opportunities, including canoeing, hiking, observing wildlife, fishing, hunting and trapping. A recent victory was the creation by DEC of the 600-acre Black Creek State Forest just north of Chodikee Lake. There is the potential to build on the success of the nearby Walkway Over the Hudson and grow the local outdoor recreation economy through linking the Walkway and the Hudson Valley Rail Trail to the John Burroughs Black Creek Corridor, a continuous water/land corridor along the Black Creek that incorporates such public open

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

space amenities as the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary, Black Creek State Forest, Chodikee Lake and Scenic Hudson's Black Creek Preserve.

**ROCKLAND RIVERFRONT COMMUNITIES/PALISADES RIDGE {35.} ♦** – The Palisades Ridge is a narrow ridge located along the western shore of the Hudson River in northeastern New Jersey and southeastern New York. It begins in New Jersey and continues north within the Villages/Hamlets of Palisades, Sparkill, Grandview, Upper Grandview, Nyack, and Upper Nyack. It passes through Rockland Lake State Park, then goes north through Haverstraw, where it pivots westward through High Tor State Park and South Mountain County Park. It then terminates in Gurnee County Park. The Palisades Ridge ranges in altitude from 500 to 700 feet. It is located within two main watersheds: 1) the Hudson River Watershed, and 2) the Upper Hackensack River watershed and four sub-watersheds: 1.) the Sparkill Creek, 2.) the West Branch Hackensack River, 3.) the Lower Branch Hackensack River, and 4.) the Minisceongo Creek.

The Hackensack River watershed, along with the sub-watersheds of the same name, flow into Lake DeForest, a United Water NY public drinking water reservoir, which serves Rockland County, NY and Bergen County, NJ. Therefore, all watersheds and sub-watersheds of the Palisades Ridge need special consideration and protection because they drain into: 1) the Hudson, a NYSDEC-designated Priority Waterbody; 2) Class A wetlands; or 3) Lake DeForest, a critical drinking water supply. There are many other values of the Palisades Ridge. The Long Path Hiking Trail follows along the entire length of the Palisades Ridge. Along the Ridge are important wildlife habitat areas, Hudson River and inland wetlands (the Class A wetlands mentioned above), and scenic vistas, including the Tappan Zee Scenic District and designated Critical Environmental Areas.

The Palisades Ridge and its scenic vistas, recreational uses, important watershed for public water supply and Lower Hudson River drainage must remain the focus of preservation efforts. High Tor connects the Palisades Ridge and the Rockland Highlands, and opportunities exist to secure additional sections of prominent, steeply sloping talus and woodlands adjacent to High Tor State Park.

### **SCHUNNEMUNK MOUNTAIN/MOODNA CREEK/WOODCOCK MOUNTAIN/HUDSON HIGHLANDS**

**CONNECTIVITY PROJECT {36.} ♦** – Schunnemunk Mountain, the tallest in Orange County, supports rare plants, animals, and ecological communities, while parts of the Moodna Creek and its watershed have been designated as “irreplaceable” Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats by the NY State Coastal Zone Management Program. The marsh at the mouth of Moodna Creek is significant habitat for rare plants and contains rare natural communities, including brackish intertidal mudflats and brackish tidal marsh, and Knox's Headquarters State Historic Site is adjacent to this important tributary to the Hudson River. This area is also a Mecca for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts and contains a seven-mile stretch of the Long Path. It has exceptional scenic value, particularly where the Moodna Viaduct crosses through the valley at the north end of Schunnemunk Mountain. The ridgeline of this mountain provides unparalleled views up and down the Hudson River to the east and the Shawangunk Ridge and Catskill Mountains to the west. The Schunnemunk Mountain State Park was established in 2004 with the

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

acquisition of 2,467 acres that included Schunnemunk Mountain and the scenic agricultural fields at its base.

Access to Schunnemunk Mountain is made possible by the Long Path and a series of other public parking areas and trails, some of which pass through a unique collection of large ridgetop rocks known as “megaliths.” Orange County maintains Gonzaga Park at the southern tip of Schunnemunk Mountain. This 216-acre county park provides access to the Long Path. It is a substantial but isolated tract of protected land; a large portion of Schunnemunk Mountain, mainly on the southern and western sides, remains unprotected. There is also a significant gap of unprotected land between Gonzaga Park and the State Park. Natural features adjacent to Schunnemunk Mountain that are worthy of conservation include Woodcock Mountain, Tobias Hill and the Woodbury Creek corridor.

- **Hudson Highlands Connectivity Project** – Several organizations have begun a multi-year initiative known as the Hudson Highlands Connectivity Project. The goal of the project is to create a wildlife corridor between the biologically rich core of the western Hudson Highlands (Black Rock Forest, Storm King Mountain State Park, and the West Point Military Academy (while closed to the public, the Academy owns approximately 16,000 acres) and Schunnemunk Mountain State Park (SMSP). This corridor is currently 95% forested, and its protection will provide permanent connectivity and vital migration routes that will link existing hubs of conserved land. As the environment continues to change, protected corridors like this will become increasingly vital to ensuring plants and animals have the room to disperse and migrate. Other project benefits include enhancing recreational access, protecting critical watershed and wetlands that recharge groundwater and control flooding, and conserving high-quality streams with breeding trout populations, such as Mineral Springs Brook, Trout Brook, and Woodbury Creek.

In this critical area, several roads have been designated as scenic byways by the state, state parks have identified scenic vistas, and the entire Hudson shoreline extending into the hills is part of the Hudson Highlands Scenic Area of Statewide Significance. Currently most of the lands between SMSP and Black Rock Forest are in private hands. While the largest of these vacant parcels, the 702-acre Legacy Ridge property, was purchased by the Open Space Institute in March 2013, many future land acquisition projects aim to protect relatively small parcels ranging from 10 to 50 acres.

**SHAWANGUNK MOUNTAINS REGION {37.} ♦ ^–** The Shawangunk Mountains are a distinctive part of the Appalachian Mountains and are located in Ulster, Orange and Sullivan counties. This geologically unique mountain region is one of New York’s iconic landscape features, and about 400,000 visitors annually use the more than 100 miles of trails and 90 miles of carriage roads for hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, horseback riding, and nature study. Trails in the Shawangunks are part of larger regional trail networks. The 36-mile Shawangunk Ridge Trail connects the Appalachian Trail (near High Point State Park in New Jersey) with the 330-mile Long Path shortly before the Long Path enters the Catskills. The Shawangunks are also recognized as a world-class rock-climbing destination.

Together public and private entities have protected more than 30,000 acres in the Northern Shawangunks, including Minnewaska State Park Preserve (22,000 acres), Sam’s Point Preserve (an

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

approximately 5,000-acre National Natural Landmark managed by The Nature Conservancy and owned by the Open Space Conservancy), and the 7,500-acre Mohonk Preserve. The Mohonk Mountain House resort (1,200 acres) is a National Historic Landmark and a regional anchor for heritage and ecotourism.

The publicly accessible recreational opportunities in the Shawangunks exemplify the “quality of life” benefits of conservation investment for people, as well as solid economic return. A recent economic study (2010) conducted by The Mohonk Preserve, The Nature Conservancy and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation revealed that the three major preserves serve as important economic engines, driving local tourism and contributing \$12.3 million to the local economy, while supporting 350 local jobs.

The Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway was designated by New York in 2006 as a NYS Scenic Byway, offering visitors to our region another way to enjoy the unique scenery and other tourism amenities around the Shawangunks. The Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Region is a distinctive 134,000-acre area encircling the northern Shawangunk Mountains defining the corridor of the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway, an 82-mile network of designated highways. The Byway goals are to provide economic growth through a tourism distribution strategy, to improve transportation, and to preserve the scenic, natural, recreational and historic resources of the region. Implementation of the Corridor Management Plan is the responsibility of the Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership, an inter-municipal organization consisting of the nine towns and two villages that participate in the Byway.

The Corridor Management Plan, and the Regional Open Space Plan, developed by the partnership with the cooperation of many conservation and community groups, identifies goals, key strategies and projects for preservation of the region’s intrinsic resources. Particular importance is given in these plans to protection of the northern Shawangunks, which is the centerpiece of the byway, and key scenic and natural lands in the Wallkill and Rondout valleys of the region. Additionally, through the cooperative effort of the towns, DOT and the Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership, restoration and enhancement of the scenic overlooks and pull-offs will provide interpretive wayfinding experiences along the Byway.

**Natural Resources and Biodiversity Values** – Protection of the Shawangunks is critical to maintaining the input of high-quality water to the Rondout and Wallkill valleys. Five “sky lakes” along the northern part of the ridge are headwaters to streams that join the Rondout and Wallkill rivers, both tributaries to the Hudson River. In the southern Shawangunks, streams originating on the ridgetop flow east to the Shawangunkkill, a designated Wild and Scenic River, and west of the 3,000-acre Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area, the largest freshwater wetland complex in southeastern New York State.

The Shawangunk Mountains are the northern section of a 256-mile-long Kittatinny-Shawangunk Ridge and Corridor that runs from Pennsylvania through New Jersey to southern New York. The Nature Conservancy has identified the northern Shawangunks as a globally significant forest block, home to exemplary natural communities, including the globally rare dwarf pine ridge community, over 7,000 acres of pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit, one of the largest chestnut oak forests (38,000 acres) in New York, extensive northern hardwood forests, and cliff, talus and ice cave communities. Within these communities are over 57 known rare or imperiled plant and animal species.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

The Shawangunks are part of the Appalachian Raptor Migration Corridor and Sam's Point Preserve, Minnewaska State Park Preserve and the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area are all designated Important Bird Areas by National Audubon and Bird Conservation Areas by New York State. Taken together, these elements of biodiversity make the Shawangunks one of the highest priority areas for biodiversity conservation in the northeastern United States.

Consistent and ecologically sensitive management of the parks and preserves along the Shawangunks is coordinated by the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership, a 12-member collaboration of public and private agencies and land managers formed in 1994, dedicated to the protection and restoration of the natural communities of the Shawangunks on a landscape scale.

**Landscape Connectivity** – The Shawangunk Mountains are in proximity to other significant biodiversity areas identified as priorities in this plan, including the Karst Aquifer Area, the Catskill Mountains, the Basha Kill Wetlands Complex, the Great Rondout Wetlands, the Shawangunk Grasslands, the Plutarch/Esopus Wetlands and the Wallkill River Valley. Stream corridors, flood plains areas, forest blocks, wetland complexes and agricultural lands that can provide natural linkages between the Shawangunks and these features should be considered as priorities for protection, in order to create wildlife migration corridors and to provide flood control, habitat and trail connections across an increasingly developed landscape.

An 8,000-acre goal for protection of agricultural lands in the Rondout and Wallkill valleys has recently been established. A prime example of these linkages is the Catskill-Shawangunk Greenway in the Rondout Valley in the Town of Wawarsing along the Route 209 corridor. Protection of extensive floodplain areas and priority undeveloped agricultural lands (NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision) and forest tracts could create connectivity for wildlife and protect floodplains that serve to mitigate the impacts of flooding, and would support an extensive trail system, linking the D&H Canal Trail and the Shawangunk Ridge Trails to the Catskill Mountains, while stimulating tourism-based economic activity, including agritourism, in Wawarsing. Similarly, on the east side of the Northern Shawangunks is the important connection between the Wallkill Valley and the Mohonk Preserve Foothills, which will protect slope forest, riparian tributaries and wetlands. This conservation priority will also foster scenic view and farmland protection, connectivity for recreation and eco-permeability from the valley to the Ridge as part of the whole large-scale landscape approach. Other examples include a Shawangunk/Karst Aquifer connection surrounding the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in the Towns of Rosendale and Ulster, the Verkeerderkill/Shawangunkill/Shawangunk Grasslands connection in Shawangunk, and the Basha Kill Wetlands/Shawangunks connection and Neversink Highlands/Shawangunk connection in Sullivan County.

### **Protection Priorities:**

- **Northern Shawangunks** – Protection of approximately 12,500 additional acres of land is needed to protect biodiversity and scenic and recreational values of the Northern Shawangunks. Highest priority projects include Peterskill Gorge, Sanders Kill Area, Witch's Hole/Stonykill Falls Area, Palmaghatt Ravine-Millbrook-Bayards-Near Trapps Escarpment, Trapps Gateway, the Verkeerderkill

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Falls/Sam's Point Preserve area and other areas listed above that link the Shawangunks to other nearby conservation priorities.

- **Southern Shawangunks** – Protection of the Southern Shawangunks in Orange and Sullivan counties will enable a greenway corridor for recreation and biodiversity conservation, extending from Sam's Point Preserve to the New Jersey state line, completing the protection and buffer for the 30-mile-long Shawangunk Ridge Trail corridor. Efforts continue to protect the ridge top and both its western and eastern slopes and bases, which contain the NYS Bashakill Wildlife Management Area. Important projects are linkages between the Shawangunk Ridge State Forest through the Roosa Gap to the Wurtsboro Ridge State Forest lands, including protection to Route 17; linking Wurtsboro Ridge to the BashaKill Wildlife Management Area; linking south of Basha Kill to Guymard Lake; and links south to Highpoint State Park in NJ. The ridge contains remnants of the historic Delaware and Hudson Canal and the New York, Ontario and Western Railroad, offering opportunities for linking existing trail networks in these parts to other rail trail projects and historic/cultural tourism in Sullivan County and beyond. The most vulnerable portion of the ridgetop is a 20-mile stretch from Route 17 to the New Jersey State Line, east of Route 209, in the Towns of Mamakating, Greenville, Mount Hope and Deer Park. Scenic values are threatened by the planned extension of the Route 17/(future) I-86 and development pressure along the ridge and in the vicinity.

**WALLKILL VALLEY {38.} ♦^** – The Wallkill River begins in the mountains of northern New Jersey and enters New York via the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge on the NY/NJ border. From there, it flows through the fertile black dirt region of southern Orange County and then winds through a variety of landscapes, some amazingly rich in biodiversity and productive farmland, joining the Rondout just south of the City of Kingston, Ulster County, a short distance from its confluence with the Hudson. It provides excellent opportunities for recreational fishing and boating. A Southern Wallkill Biodiversity Plan (Wildlife Conservation Society/Metropolitan Conservation Alliance) identifies critical areas in need of protection. In addition, counties, local municipalities and NGOs completed a Wallkill River Watershed Management Plan. Through these planning processes, open space priorities have been identified for future protection measures.

The Shawangunk National Wildlife Refuge (Galeville Grasslands) and surrounding agricultural landscape in southern Ulster County and northern Orange County provide an area of rare grassland habitat large enough to support a suite of grassland-dependent birds, including short-eared owls, northern harriers, upland sandpipers, vesper sparrows, grasshopper sparrows and many others. Audubon recognizes this area as an Important Bird Area. This area also provides significant recreational opportunities, including hiking, bird watching and hunting. Opportunities to conserve additional lands in this area should be pursued.

## REGIONS 3 & 4

**CATSKILL RIVER AND ROAD CORRIDORS {39.} ♦^** – On a daily basis, thousands of people use major travel corridors such as Rt. 28, Rt. 212, Rt. 214, Rt. 23, Rt. 23A, Rt. 42, Rt. 30, Rt. 10, Rt. 17 (future Interstate 86), and Rt. 97 to access numerous Catskill communities and popular recreation destinations. Because these major travel corridors generally follow major river corridors, they provide

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

visitors with a memorable first impression of the Catskill/Delaware region as a vital riverine habitat. Some of these river corridors are not only particularly important as fisheries resources, but they are also exceptional recreational resources that provide immeasurably to the region's nature-based economy. Unfortunately, many sections of these river and road corridors are experiencing an increase in development which has resulted in severely damaging flood incidents, some of which have proven fatal. Land protection priority should be given to parcels that protect riparian buffer land, preserve or restore flood plain areas, protect scenic areas and vistas along principle road corridors and on visible ridgelines, protect flood-prone areas and enhance public access and recreational opportunities.

### **Region 3/4 Focus Areas include the following:**

- **Beaverkill/Willowemoc/Route 17 (future Interstate 86) Corridor:** The watershed for these two famous trout streams is located in western Sullivan and southern Delaware counties. The watershed is currently largely forested, with development limited to areas in the vicinity of villages and hamlets. Providing expanded access to the headwaters area of both streams would enhance the recreational and economic value of these resources for local communities and the region. Protection of the watershed is important for the high-quality trout fisheries here, which are dependent on abundant, cold, pure water. This area is also inundated with flood waters, and recently the Army Corp of Engineers completed a feasibility study to address future flooding, with mitigation actions such as wetland creation and floodplain management strategies that are being explored.
- **Delaware River Branches and Main Stem Corridors:** The region encompassing the Delaware River corridor is identified in the Open Space Plan as a Major Greenway and Recreationway in Regions 3, 4 and 7. The entire Delaware River corridor from Hancock (Delaware County) to Cherry Island (Orange County) is designated as a National Scenic and Recreational River and is the only National Park Service (NPS) area in New York State of this scale and integrity. The East and West Branches of the Delaware River, as well as the main stem of the Delaware River, are exceptional cold water fisheries. As the longest undammed river in the eastern U.S., the Delaware River provides unparalleled access to the full range of habitats for nearly all migratory (diadromous) fish species of the Atlantic Coast. These rivers also offer numerous recreational opportunities, such as fishing, canoeing, rafting, and eagle watching, which attract many visitors and boost the regional economy. This area also contains a unique geographical feature, Point Mountain, one of the only free-standing mountains in the world, which lies at the confluence of the East and West branches. These rivers and their watersheds are also critical biological resources, from both aquatic and terrestrial standpoints, with many rare, unique, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species living in this area.

The Delaware River Basin supplies over 15-million people (approximately 5% of the nation's population) with water for drinking and agricultural and industrial uses. These users include residents in New York City, Trenton, NJ and Philadelphia, PA. Three reservoirs on Delaware River tributaries make up part of the New York City Water Supply System, which is the nation's largest unfiltered municipal water supply. Protection of these watersheds is critical for the continuation of a clean drinking water supply for millions of people. Currently only a tiny percentage of land along

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

the Delaware River Branches and Main Stem corridor is permanently protected. Since the 2009 plan, NYCDEP has acquired 20,808 acres in the Delaware River drainage basin.

- **Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB)/Route 97:** A 70-mile linear corridor running along State Route 97 in Orange, Sullivan and Delaware counties that encompasses the Upper Delaware River and its river communities, the Byway connects communities, scenic, recreational, natural, cultural and historical resources throughout the valley. It also encompasses the National Park Service's Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Portions of the Byway are also designated as Bike Route 17, which intersects with Bicycle Route "Y" at the Roebling Bridge connecting to Pennsylvania.

The UDSB Enhancement Concept was developed through the collaboration of various partnering agencies, as well as the River Management Plan from NPS. It is also the area of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, which has identified many opportunities to improve river accesses for the public as well as amenities for the travelling public, be they on the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway or the river itself. This includes building a visitor center for the Byway at the Fort Delaware campus in Narrowsburg, fixing problems associated with the Callicoon Overflow Channel, redesigning and improving accesses such as Kellam's Bridge, Long Eddy, and Skinners Falls, creating access where needed, such as in Pond Eddy, and improving wayfinding signage to facilitate navigation to the resources and to convey the message that a visitor has arrived in an area of national significance and resources.

- A. Sites of Historic Significance – Fort Delaware, Minisink Battleground, and Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct and Delaware & Hudson Canal would all benefit from protections and increased funding for creating trails and programming. Linkages to other priority areas include the Basha Kill Wetlands and the Shawangunks, where the D&H Canal continues.
  - B. Publicly Owned Lands – Hickok Brook Multiple Use Area, Lake Superior State Park and Crystal Lake Forest Preserve are under-programmed and would greatly benefit from having programming, including improvement and expansion that reflect the needs of area residents and visitors. Additionally, a partnership among residents, municipalities and the state would help maximize the benefits of these lands and illustrate their value.
- **Neversink River Corridor:** The Neversink River is a 55-mile-long tributary of the Delaware River, where the main flow begins slightly south of the border between Ulster and Sullivan counties. The Neversink Corridor region begins after the river leaves the Neversink Reservoir in Sullivan County and continues until the river reaches the Delaware River in Orange County. It flows generally southeast through the mountains and the Towns of Fallsburg, Thompson and Forestburgh in Sullivan County and the City of Port Jervis and the Town of Deerpark in Orange County. This corridor then links to the Neversink Gorge Vicinity (detailed in the Neversink Highlands Priority Area) and ends at the Delaware River (detailed in the River Corridor and Delaware Highlands priority areas). Many opportunities exist along the river to increase public access, provide scenic vistas, and develop trails (detailed in the Trail System Priority Area).
  - **Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area:** The Mongaup River drainage, a tributary to the main stem of the Delaware River in Sullivan and Orange counties, is a critical nesting and wintering area for bald eagles and also provides numerous public hunting and fishing opportunities. Audubon

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

recognizes this valley as an Important Bird Area. Opportunities for expansion exist in several areas adjacent to the current Wildlife Management Area, especially the large privately owned reservoir lands to the north and undeveloped parcels in the south. Consideration should be given to preserving habitat, water quality and the viewshed on large, contiguous, vacant parcels held by private hunt clubs through conservation easement acquisitions. Potential linkages exist to Lake Superior State Park and other recreational areas, including the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway and the original Woodstock concert site, now known as Bethel Woods Performing Arts Center.

- **Route 28 Corridor:** New York State Route 28 is the primary road corridor through the central Catskill high peaks region, connecting population centers and major interstates in metropolitan Kingston and Oneonta. Because of this existing transportation infrastructure, it is well suited for sustainable small-scale economic development to draw visitors, support local businesses and preserve the natural environment. This area provides an opportunity to simultaneously protect land and promote growth in the Catskills using outdoor recreation-based tourism that focuses on land preservation and controlled recreational use of public natural areas. Environmentally sound economic development initiatives here are very sustainable. It is a potential State Scenic Byway and includes eastern and western gateways to the Catskill Park. Priority areas along this route are known as Gateway Properties, lands adjacent to, and visible from, the easternmost five or six miles of Rt. 28 and include, but are not limited to:
  - A. **Blue Stone Wild Forest:** Just west of Kingston in Ulster County, covering and connecting four towns, this area is actively used by mountain bikers, hikers and birders but holds great potential for expansion and further development of its trail system as a mountain biking destination. The topography, terrain and precipitation pattern in this part of the Catskills are conducive to more intensive recreational uses with minimal damage to natural resources. Within the boundaries of Bluestone Wild Forest are areas of significant historical and cultural significance, including the bluestone quarry industry. Significant portions of several historic roads and trails connecting area towns—Jockey Hill Rd., Evergreen Road and the Waughkonk Trail—lie within Blue Stone Wild Forest. State lands within the core area between Route 28 and Sawkill Road should be consolidated, and those parcels along Route 28 should be acquired to provide trailhead access points, protect historic trails and roads where possible, and preserve this impressive scenic viewshed. It is recommended that the Blue Stone Wild Forest boundaries be extended to incorporate numerous, now isolated DEC tracts increasingly used for recreation. Two lie south of Route 28 in the Towns of West Hurley and Ulster, seven lie north of Sawkill Rd. in the Towns of Woodstock and Kingston. Protecting, connecting and potentially expanding some of these tracts as part of the overall protection plan for Blue Stone Wild Forest will facilitate their consolidation into larger, coherent open space resources within and between communities facing ever increasing development pressures.
  - B. **Ticeteneyck Mt./Tonshi Mt./Kenozia Lake:** The first highly visible, mountainous, open space area along Rt. 28 in Ulster County; several large private land holdings have been protected through fee acquisition (DEC) or by conservation easements acquired by New York City, but a number still remain unprotected.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- C. **Catskill Interpretive Center Area:** Opportunity to connect the proposed Ulster County Interpretive Center site with existing Forest Preserve lands situated on Mt. Tobias. Acquisition of key parcels along Rt. 28 and Wittenberg Rd. will protect the views of mountains, forests, and meadows from the proposed visitor center.
- D. **Meade Hill/Fleischmann Mountain** – A large, highly visible, completely unprotected mountain ridge immediately adjacent to Rt. 28 in the Town of Middletown; critical to the continuity of mountain habitat and vistas between Dry Brook Ridge and the Belleayre Mountain Ski Area.
- **E. Catskill Mountain Heritage Trail** – Includes significant historic sites and scenic views from the John Burroughs Homestead, Burroughs Memorial site, and Woodchuck Lodge near Roxbury on Route 30, continuing easterly along the Route 23 and 23A corridors, and extending to the Thomas Cole House in the Village of Catskill. Very few acres of the original Burroughs Homestead are permanently protected, and there is a critical need to protect the pastoral setting surrounding Woodchuck Lodge and the Burroughs Memorial site.

**CATSKILLS UNFRAGMENTED FOREST {40.} ♦^** – The region encompassing the Catskill Mountains is identified in the Open Space Plan as a Major Resource Area in Regions 3 and 4. The Catskill Park, which is a mosaic of State Forest Preserve lands and private property, comprises a large, central part of this region. Large, unfragmented areas of forest land in the Catskill high peaks area are excellent candidates for addition to the Forest Preserve. Audubon recognizes this area as an Important Bird Area. Priority should be given to protecting individually large parcels that: border, connect, or provide better access to existing State land; connect valley bottoms to mountainsides and peaks or ridges; are of scenic, cultural, or recreational importance; and/or contain particularly diverse, unique, or threatened natural species or communities.

### **Region 3 Conservation Efforts should focus on the following sites:**

- **Overlook Mountain, Mount Guardian:** Priority should be given to properties identified in the Overlook Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan. Land acquisition is important for creating a usable and viable wild forest in an area that has long influenced painters, writers and musicians, and played a prominent role in creating America's perspective on nature and wilderness. Significant areas include the slopes and high elevations of Mt. Guardian. Headwater streams that flow off the northern and southern slopes of this highly visible mountain feed the Sawkill Creek, which is the drinking water supply for the City of Kingston. The ridgeline extending from Overlook Mountain Wild Forest to Meads Mountain and Mount Guardian provides a dramatic backdrop to the Village of Woodstock and viewsheds from there and beyond.

The Town of Woodstock owns an extensive forested tract of land extending along the southern face of Meads Mountain westward to include the upper slopes of Mt. Guardian up to the ridgeline. The northern and western slopes of Mt. Guardian are still largely forested, including at least one unbroken large, privately owned tract covering much of the western face extending to the ridgeline. There is increasing use of the hiking trails leading from the historic Byrdcliffe Art Colony to the ridgeline across town lands. Woodstock Land Conservancy's (WLC) protection of Mt. Guardian began in 2000 with the outright gift of two ridgeline parcels totaling 18 acres. The WLC expanded

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

the area of protected forestland on Mt. Guardian by purchasing 19 acres in 2003 and nearly 12 acres in 2005, helping to protect dramatic viewsheds from the west, including Cooper Lake.

- **Indian Head Wilderness Consolidation:** Improved access and additional protection can preserve wilderness attributes, enhance recreation value, and protect scenic vistas. Improved public access is especially important due to rugged terrain and lack of road frontage; increased development pressure is also a concern in this area. Examples of opportunities to improve access and protect scenic vistas include the acquisition of Little Rocky and Olderbark mountains.
- **Balsam, Graham and Doubletop Mountains/Dry Brook Valley:** Several large tracts, including the summits of the last three Catskill peaks over 3,500' in elevation still in private ownership lie adjacent to the Big Indian Wilderness. These lands provide habitat for a distinctive assemblage of bird species, especially those that prefer subalpine coniferous forests, as well as at least one known federally threatened plant species. They play a critical role in the wilderness character of the area. Lying within New York City's watershed, they contribute clean drinking water to both the Catskill and Delaware systems. Dry Brook is also an excellent trout stream.
- **Peekamoose Gorge:** An approximately 3,300-acre tract of land in Ulster County surrounded on all sides by Forest Preserve; very rugged and remote with numerous seasonal waterfalls. Rondout Creek drains this property and is a significant trout stream and an important contributor to the New York City drinking water supply. The property harbors at least one known federally listed endangered species.
- **Upper Neversink Valley (East & West Branches):** Large forested tracts in the east and west valleys protect the source waters of the Neversink River and merge the two highest quality forest blocks in the High Allegheny Plateau. Protection of these tracts will prevent impacts to the Neversink River, reduce the potential for forest fragmentation, and improve access among the Big Indian Wilderness, the Slide Mountain Wilderness and the Sundown Wild Forest.
- **Fir Brook/Round Pond/Black Bear Road Vicinity:** This area includes tracts of land in the Willowemoc headwater areas along Flugertown Rd.; in the vicinity of Fir Brook and Blue Hill along Pole Rd., as well as hunting club lands along Black Bear Rd. and in the vicinity of Round Pond in Ulster County. The Willowemoc Creek is a renowned Catskill trout fishing stream and is listed separately in the Open Space Plan as a Priority Area. The Fir Brook wetland is a unique, scenic, remote, and wild area of the Catskills, and the Willowemoc Wild Forest is an important resource for hunting, snowmobiling, and other forms of outdoor recreation in the Catskills.
- **West Shokan/Sampsonville Area Lands:** Opportunities to expand Forest Preserve holdings on the eastern side of the Slide Mountain Wilderness in Ulster County should be explored, including areas around Maltby Hollow, and Hanover, South, High Point, and Mombaccus mountains.

### Region 4 Conservation Efforts should focus on the following sites:

- **Catskill Escarpment, Windham High Peak, and Kaaterskill Wild Forest** – Includes the dramatic landscape between the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill peaks; principal concerns are protection of significant scenic vistas and ecologically unique areas; enhancement of recreational opportunities, interpretive trails, overlooks, and improved public access; and consolidation of state holdings.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- Hunter–West Kill Wilderness/Indian Head Wilderness/Rusk Mountain Wild Forest – These very popular recreation areas lack sufficient access, especially in the Spruceton Valley and Upper Schoharie Valley. Consolidation and additional protection are essential to preserve wilderness attributes and protect scenic vistas. Additional protection and access is also needed in the western portion of the Wild Forest.

**HUDSON RIVER CORRIDOR ESTUARY/HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY AND GREENWAY TRAIL/HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL ART TRAIL {41.}** ♦ ^– Since the most recent Open Space Plan’s release in 2009, significant progress has been made conserving land in this priority project area. NYSOPRHP has acquired key inholdings to Bear Mountain State Park. NYSDEC has established Black Creek State Forest in Ulster County, a new conservation area at Vosburgh Swamp in Greene County, and a 296–acre addition to the Stockport Flats unit of the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (Little Nutten Hook) in Columbia County. The region’s land trusts and conservation organizations have worked with interested landowners to conserve ecologically significant and highly scenic land along the Black Creek corridor, at Shaupeneak Ridge, Esopus Meadows Point, and in Glasco in Ulster County, and New Baltimore in Greene County, all of which increase public access to the Hudson River, tributaries and ridgelines. Efforts to conserve historic views from the Olana State Historic Site have been redoubled via partnerships among organizations. The former Fort Montgomery Marina has been secured for public use by Scenic Hudson and the Town of Highlands, and new riverfront parkland has been secured in Milton (Ulster County), Tivoli (Dutchess County), and Bethlehem (Albany County). Wetlands, streams and uplands in the watershed of the City of Hudson’s South Bay have been conserved. Productive farmland has been conserved in agricultural areas of Dutchess, Ulster, Orange, Sullivan, Columbia, Rensselaer, and Washington counties.

The Corridor includes a number of significant projects in Regions 3 and 4 to create new links in the Greenway Trail, as described in the Greenway Act of 1991, Quadricentennial Legacy Trail (existing and new trails as designated during the 2009 Quadricentennial Celebration), and to provide public recreational opportunities with physical or visual access to the Hudson River. The project includes significant opportunities to promote habitat conservation, watershed and tributary protection, and to safeguard critical public infrastructure and adaptation needed in response to climate change, as described in the Hudson River Action Plan. The project includes, but is not limited to, the following representative sites, grouped in the following categories:

- **State Land Transfers** – State lands with natural resource and river access values which would be transferred to DEC, OPRHP or local entities for management; these could include but not be limited to: lands along Black Creek in the Town of Lloyd, the Ossining shoreline trail, Bronck Island, and the Bethlehem/Coeymans waterfront lands.
- **Hudson River Access** – Sites which provide recreational or visual access to the Hudson River, including but not limited to: Petersen’s Boatyard (Upper Nyack), Highland Falls Marina, Sleepy Hollow Waterfront, and Castle Oil in Tarrytown/Sleepy Hollow, Fort Montgomery Marina, Island Dock (Kingston), Hudson River Islands, Gorman and White Beach (Verplanck), Brockway Brickyard, Beacon Long Dock, Town of Newburgh (Anchorage), Poughkeepsie Pirate Canoe Club addition and Sand Dock Road, Lent’s Cove Addition (Buchanan), and Hudson South Bay access.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Hudson River Greenway Trail Links** – Properties along both sides of the Hudson River that would establish a continuous trail from New York City through Saratoga and Washington counties, with direct or, at a minimum, visual access to the Hudson River, trail corridors that connect cities, villages, railroad stations, and existing and potential regional trails with neighboring parks, preserve, historic sites and other natural and cultural amenities, and regional trails that link to riverside trails, including but not limited to: a “Black Creek/Burroughs” land and water trail corridor along the Black Creek that knits together the Burroughs Sanctuary, Scenic Hudson’s Black Creek Preserve, Black Creek State Forest and Chodikee Lake; a Hudson River School Art Trail that maps, preserves and promotes the painting sites of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford and Jasper Cropsey; and locally or county approved greenway trail/access plans, such as but not limited to the Westchester County RiverWalk, the Walkway Over the Hudson, the Dutchess County Greenway Trail, the Hudson Fjord Trail in Putnam and Dutchess counties, and the Walkway Loop Trail in the City of Poughkeepsie and Town of Lloyd.
- **Hudson River Greenway Water Trail Sites** – Sites along both sides of the Hudson River that would contribute to the Hudson River Valley Greenway’s Water Trail, one of nine National Water Trails. These sites provide opportunities for day and overnight use by canoes and kayaks along the shoreline of the Hudson River.
- **Hudson Tributaries** – Sites which protect habitat and provide access to stream banks of tributaries, especially in proximity to their estuarine waters, including but not limited to: Croton Gorge, Rondout Creek, Quassaick Creek, Idlewild Creek (Cornwall), Fishkill Creek, Fallkill Creek, Sawmill (Neperhan) Creek (Yonkers), Wappinger Creek, Little Wappinger Creek, Casperkill Creek, Pocantico River, Annsville Creek, Black Creek, Esopus Creek, Binnenkill Creek, Coxsackie Creek, Stockport Creek, Saw Kill, Roeliff Jansen Kill, MacGregory’s Brook (Peekskill), Moodna Creek, Landsmankill, Stony Creek, and tributaries feeding Hudson South Bay.
- **Scenic Viewsheds** – Sites which provide scenic vistas, including but not limited to: Snake Hill, Illinois Mountain, Stissing Mountain/Thompson Pond, Scofield Ridge, Fishkill Ridge, Mt. Beacon, Highland Falls Ridgeline, and viewsheds visible from publicly accessible places, points including but not limited to the Mid-Hudson Bridge/Blue Point Bluffs/Hudson Valley Winery, Camp Smith, Olana State Historic Site, Peebles Island State Park, Walkway Over the Hudson, Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, and Lands Within Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance.
- **Buffer, Access or Addition to Historic Sites, Conservation and Park Lands** – Properties which protect the integrity of existing conservation lands or historic sites, including but not limited to: Ft. Montgomery State Historic Site, Hudson North Bay, Stuyvesant Riverfront, Poughkeepsie Waterfront Trail, Schodack Island State Park, areas adjacent to Roosevelt/Vanderbilt National Historic sites, Hudson River National Historic District (Rhinebeck/Redhook area), Bear Mountain State Park, Harriman State Park, Hudson Highlands State Park, Peebles Island State Park, Clermont State Historic Site Buffer, Little Stony Point, Lyndhurst North Buffer, Tivoli Bays Buffer and inholding, Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center, Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery Lands, John Burroughs Sanctuary Buffer and Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve Sites.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Historic Sites Related to the American Revolution** – The Hudson Valley played a pivotal role in the winning of American freedom. The protection and enhancement of sites such as the New Windsor Cantonment, Fort Montgomery, Washington’s Headquarters at Newburgh, Stony Point Battlefield, Fort Hill At Peekskill, Fishkill Supply Depot in Fishkill, Bennington Battlefield at Hoosick Falls, Camp Ramapough in Suffern, and Minisink Battleground and Fort Delaware in Sullivan County, can be accomplished through the protection of land adjacent to and contiguous with these historic sites.
- **Fish and Wildlife Management** – The sites identified here conserve the habitats of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in three categories of priority habitats identified by NYSDEC: a) shoreline corridors that provide essential habitat for river otter, wood turtle, cerulean warbler, wading birds, trout, stream salamanders and Hudson River nymph; b) unbroken forests needed by scarlet tanager, wood thrush, warblers, wide-ranging mammals, hawks, owls, box turtles, and fringed polygala flower; and c) unique natural areas that support at-risk plants and animals, such as smooth cliff brake fern, grass pink orchid, bog turtle, peregrine falcon, and bald eagle. In addition, these sites provide estuarine and upland habitat, significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats as identified by the Department of State, lands adjacent to these habitats that will allow these habitats to migrate upslope as sea level rises, or significant wildlife corridors that will allow species to move to higher ground as temperatures rise due to climate change, including but not limited to: Constitution Marsh, Papscanee Island and Marsh, Shaupeneak Ridge, Scofield Ridge, Mouth of Annsville Creek, Hudson South Bay, Four Mile Point/Vosburgh Swamp/West Flats, State Estuarine Sanctuary Additions, Ramshorn Marsh, Minisceongo/Grassy Point Marshes, Eddyville Dam, Esopus Lakes, Bronck Island, Mouth of Binnen Kill and all estuarine and terrestrial “Biologically Important Areas” as designated by the Hudson River Estuary Program.
- **Urban Waterfronts** – Sites facilitating implementation of local waterfront revitalization plans that incorporate public access to the waterfront, including but not limited to: Poughkeepsie Waterfront, Beacon Waterfront, Newburgh Waterfront, Hastings Waterfront, Tarrytown Waterfront, Sleepy Hollow Waterfront, Dobbs Ferry Waterfront, Croton Waterfront, Ossining Waterfront, Peekskill Southern Waterfront and “Peekskill Landing,” Hudson Waterfront, Kingston/Ulster Waterfront, Yonkers and Highlands Waterfront.
- **Lands Important to Regional Adaptation to Sea-Level Rise** – This includes lands that are: vulnerable to inundation; help attenuate flooding and storm surges; buffer critical infrastructure; or facilitate the upland migration of tidal water bodies, intertidal and supratidal wetlands, and adjacent riparian buffers.
- **Green Edges to City and Village Centers** – Lands next to cities and villages which encompass important scenic, ecological, agricultural or cultural resources; present public recreation opportunities; prevent sprawling development patterns by providing open space edges to such densely settled areas; and have not been zoned to extend the city or village as part of a smart growth plan, nor credibly identified as appropriate locations for necessary public infrastructure.
- **Important Farmland**

**NEW YORK CITY WATERSHED LANDS {42.} ♦^** – New York City expects to continue acquisition efforts under the 1997 Watershed Agreement (signed by local communities, counties, and the State) and the

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

2007 Water Supply Permit issued by DEC, and in accordance with a comprehensive water quality-based watershed protection plan. It is recommended that the State work with the City to identify and protect high-priority sites within the Region that are not being pursued by or protected under City acquisition programs. In particular, the State should focus acquisition efforts on lands that (1) have potential for development, forestry, or fisheries and are (2) relatively large and/or (3) link areas already protected by private or public entities and/or (4) allow for improved long-term management of land and water resources. All such work by the State should naturally conform to established criteria for protection under the State Open Space Conservation Plan. Roughly 70% of NYC's east-of-Hudson reservoir basin area overlaps with, and has been identified by the USDA Forest Service as part of, a Highlands Conservation Focal Area.

**TACONIC RIDGE/HARLEM VALLEY {43.} ♦** – An area comprising the Taconic Mountain Ridge and its viewsheds, where it straddles the New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont borders in Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia and Rensselaer counties, and the Harlem Valley. At its southern end, it is anchored by the Cranberry Mountain State Wildlife Management Area in Putnam County and extends to the north through Quaker Hill in Pawling and eastern Dutchess County along the Connecticut border, west to include the Harlem Valley and lands to the west, including West Mountain, and north to the Taconic State Park. From here it extends northerly through Columbia and Rensselaer counties, westerly to include the Route 22 Corridor and its viewsheds, and northward along the borders of Massachusetts and Vermont. The viewshed includes the Taconic Ridge, Harlem Valley, Route 22 corridor, farmlands of central Dutchess County, and Stissing Mountain.

Protection of this area continues to be a high priority due to the region's high biodiversity, presence of threatened and endangered species, scenic views, substantial recreational value, thousands of acres of intact/unfragmented forestland, steeply sloping hillsides, unique geologic segments, historic architecture, working farm landscapes, and multiple connection opportunities to land currently protected by the State, federal government, counties, towns and private land conservation organizations. The Taconic Ridge is a Forest Legacy Area and qualified to apply for land acquisition grants through the federal Forest Legacy Program. In 2013, DEC received a federal Forest Legacy Program grant for the purchase of a 1,300-acre conservation easement on Mount Lebanon, which contains some of the most spectacularly scenic, ecologically important and culturally significant resources found in the area. The easement will provide opportunities for public recreation, environmental education and archeological research.

Numerous trail systems, including the Appalachian Trail, Taconic Crest Trail and South Taconic Trail extending beyond the New York border, and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, continue to be important projects for this area and will increase recreational opportunities for the public and provide permanent public use and access of the Taconic Ridge area. In addition, acquisition of properties in the Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley and Route 22 corridor will protect important open space, scenic viewsheds, working farm landscapes, and watersheds and water quality, and preserve critical wildlife habitat for several threatened and endangered species.

Specific projects include the Shaker Swamp, an almost 500-acre wetland complex supporting high biodiversity and serving as an important aquifer recharge area; surrounding active farmland,

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

formerly owned by the Shakers and regarded as historically significant; Schein Parcel, a connector between Cranberry Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area and Ciaiola County Park; Ice Pond and its wetland system and surrounding forested areas that support a high diversity of critical habitat species and peat wetlands; Nuclear Lake–West Mountain connectors; Depot Hill and Taconic State Park additions; various intact camp properties; Wassaic Multiple Use Area buffers, including Taconic DDS/Wassaic State School; Appalachian Trail, Taconic Crest Trail, South Taconic Trail and Harlem Valley Rail Trail connectors and viewshed protection, including the Appalachian Trail viewshed as seen from the Cat Rocks overlook and the Telephone Pioneers Shelter Overnight Use Area in the vicinity of the Dover Oak (the largest blazed tree on the Appalachian Trail) near West Dover Road in Pawling and Dover; Little Whaley Lake; the Crane Pond and Depression Pond area on East Mountain; Route 22 corridor viewshed protection; prime farmland soils and designated wetlands along Route 22 and the Webatuck Creek and Ten Mile River; unique geologic segments of the Taconic Ridge, such as East Mountain, Rattlesnake Mountain, Stissing Mountain/Thompson Pond, West Mountain, Seven Wells, and Nellie Hill and Stone Church buffers; and exceptional plant and wildlife habitat areas ranked on the State Natural Heritage Inventory, such as rattlesnake and bog turtle habitat, limestone wet meadows, graminoid fens and sedge meadows.

Since this area’s inclusion in the initial State Open Space Conservation Plan, thousands of acres have been protected in Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia and Rensselaer counties. Nonetheless, because key portions of the area demonstrating high biodiversity, scenic views, recreational value, working forests and farmland, and potential connections to other protected lands remain unprotected, the Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley and associated viewsheds continue to be high priorities for protection. In addition, extensions of the Taconic Crest Trail and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, as well as protection of the Route 22 corridor, which includes scenic vistas, highly productive farmland, and wetland habitat supporting endangered and threatened species, continue to be important considerations within the overall area.

**TURTLE CONSERVATION SITES {44.} ♦** – These wetlands and associated uplands provide habitats for a high diversity of turtles, including some of New York’s most imperiled species. The wetlands are scattered across Columbia, Dutchess, Putnam, Ulster, and Orange counties. Some important concentrations include the Fishkill Creek, Wallkill River, Sprout Creek, Housatonic River, Great Swamp and Wappinger Creek drainage basins. This area supports the highest diversity of turtles in New York State and provides habitat for five species of state-listed endangered, threatened and special concern species, including the bog turtle (state endangered, federally threatened) and Blanding’s turtle (state threatened). These sites include rare and significant ecological communities, such as calcareous fens, dwarf shrub bogs, shrub swamps and floodplain forest. This project includes additions to James Baird State Park and the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, as well as the creation of new preserves, and encompasses the Dutchess Meadows project.

**DELAWARE RIVER HIGHLANDS {45.} ♦** – Few large globally significant forest ecosystems remain intact today in the continental United States. One of these key remaining ecological regions, the High Allegheny Plateau, covers land areas in both New York and Pennsylvania. Those portions in Sullivan and

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Delaware counties are known as the Delaware River Highlands, where the geology, soils, climate, elevation and landform configuration define the ecological potential of this system for providing significant water quality preservation and unmatched wildlife habitat. With such proximity to major Metropolitan areas like New York City, Trenton and Philadelphia, this eco-region is a critical hub for other collections of nearby smaller forests, river corridors and ridge tops to provide contiguous natural resource protection. As such, the Upper Delaware Highlands is a critical area to protect because it remains one of the last large globally important forest ecosystems within the High Allegheny Plateau that can provide connective wildlife corridors, produce important food crops, preserve water quality and quantity and retain a quickly diminishing unique wild landscape.

As noted under the Catskill River and Road Corridor section, this region encompasses New York's largest portion of the National Park System and includes the Upper Delaware River Scenic and Recreational River. This designation should be better leveraged to enhance tourism and preservation efforts. While legally allowed to own 1,000 acres in the corridor, the NPS has agreed to own only 124 acres as per the River Management Plan, and currently owns approximately 30 acres. Efforts should be made through other ownership opportunities and easements to continue preservation efforts in this area. The NPS should be supported and promoted to ensure funding of this vital resource continues. Working with regional groups, the Delaware River should also be promoted to become a National Water Trail.

This area has been engaging in a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program planning process, which has identified many opportunities described below. Conservation efforts should focus on preserving, through both easement and fee acquisition, large stretches of contiguous undeveloped or minimally developed lands. Additionally, maintaining and improving programming for existing areas is important for fostering use and stewardship of the region's natural environment. Priority areas in this section include:

- **Forest Lands** – NY State's Upper Delaware Highlands are home to dozens of hunt clubs who own, en masse, more than 30,000 acres. Privately managed and most in existence for more than a century, many of these hunting organizations have practiced sound stewardship standards primarily focused on approved forestry plans pursuant to NY's Forest Tax Law 480A program. Add to that over 10,000 acres owned by the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of America, and it is clear that the amount of forest that is not in public ownership or protected by conservation easements is a significant portion of the total area. These organizations are faced with pressures that include shrinking wildlife habitat in surrounding Catskill communities, expanding pressures of residential and commercial development, and risks to water quality and quantity, and enticing offers for natural gas exploration. These landowners may prefer to preserve their forest lands in their natural state through the sale of conservation easements to prevent further development, subdivision and incompatible use. Conservation efforts by the State and land trusts should focus on protecting this unique contiguous swath of wild lands that will preserve critical wildlife habitat, preserve the underlying watershed, support outdoor related economies and maintain rural community character.
- **Sites of Historic Significance** – Fort Delaware, Minisink Battleground, Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct and Delaware & Hudson Canal, and the Woodstock concert site would all benefit from protections and increased funding for creating trails and programming. Linkages to other priority areas include

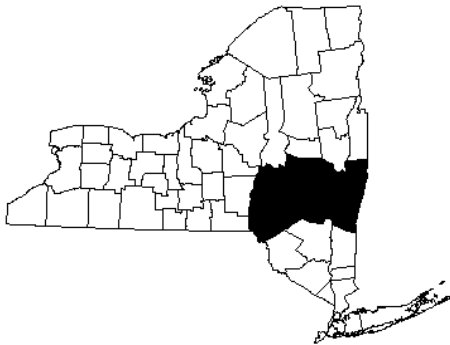
## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

the Catskill River and Road Corridors, the Basha Kill Wetland System and the Shawangunk Mountain Region, where the D&H Canal continues into Ulster County.

- **Publicly Owned Lands** – Hickok Brook Multiple Use Area, Lake Superior State Park and Crystal Lake Forest Preserve, among others, are under-programmed and would greatly benefit from having programming, including improvement and expansion that reflects the needs of area residents and visitors. Additionally, these lands are ripe for a partnership among the residents, municipalities and the state to help maximize their benefits to area residents and visitors and downriver communities, helping both the State and area communities realize the value of the lands.

### REGION 4/CAPITAL REGION



Many of the geographic features in the Lower Hudson River Valley continue north into the Capital Region. The Hudson River is tidal up to the Troy Dam, while in reaches above the dam its freshwater flows are beyond the tides' influence. The Capital Region and the Lower Hudson Valley (Region 3) are rich in wildlife habitat, with 22 significant habitat types that support species of greatest conservation need (SCGN ♦).\*

The Hudson River Valley is broad and much flatter in the Capital Region, a legacy of the sands and clays left by an enormous glacial lake. The limestone Helderberg escarpment is a prominent landscape feature on the west side of the river. The Albany Pine Bush is one of the world's few inland pine barrens. The Taconic Range along the eastern border of the State has a complex geologic history, which provided some of the evidence for modern plate tectonic theory. The Northern Catskill Mountains are perhaps most famous for their role in art. Kaaterskill Clove, a steep gorge cut into the massive wall of the Catskill Mountain front, was one of the key inspirations for the artists of the Hudson River School. The Catskill Forest Preserve, established in 1904, has helped protect much of the scenic beauty of the Catskill Mountains.

History is everywhere in the Hudson Valley, one of the first areas colonized by the Dutch, following Henry Hudson's 1609 discovery of the Hudson River. Development of the present Capital District area was driven by the strategic location where the navigable Hudson River ended and the Mohawk River began its course to the west. After dams, canals and locks were built, Albany was a hub for Erie Canal/Mohawk River traffic from the west and Champlain Canal traffic from the north.

*\* 2006 NYSDEC Conservation Framework*

To read the Region 4 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

**ALBANY PINE BUSH {46.} ♦** – This area of Albany County and a small portion of eastern Schenectady County support a rare and endangered inland pine barrens ecosystem. Protection guidelines for much of this area are established by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission in their 2010 management plan, with the overall objective of establishing an ecologically viable and manageable preserve. The plan included an expanded study area up to the Schenectady County border in response to public feedback. While tremendous success has been achieved with the protection of over 3,200 acres to date,

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

the commission currently estimates that an additional 2,180 acres must be secured to create a viable preserve of 5,380 acres. The Region 4 Advisory Committee supports the work of the commission toward meeting its goals, and encourages conservation efforts directed at areas of existing and restorable Pine Bush habitat not included within the area designated.

**COXSACKIE FLATS GRASSLAND AREA {47.}** ♦ – This approximately 6,000-acre area, located in the eastern Greene County communities of New Baltimore, Coxsackie, and Athens, represents an important habitat for a suite of breeding and wintering grassland-dependent birds. Grassland habitat, such as that occupying the Coxsackie Flats area, has been disappearing at a high rate due to succession, changing agricultural practices, and development, resulting in a significant decline in most grassland breeding species, including but not limited to upland sandpiper, eastern meadowlark, bobolink, Henslow’s sparrow, and grasshopper sparrow. Similarly, the flats area provides important habitat for wintering raptors, particularly the state-endangered short-eared owl and state threatened northern harrier. Over 300 acres of the Coxsackie Flats area has been protected through a partnership between the Greene Land Trust and the Greene County IDA; however, the majority of the flats continue to be vulnerable, and increased protection is necessary to secure this significant grassland habitat and very popular recreational birding area.

**DROWNED LANDS SWAMP WATERSHED {48.}** ♦ – This significant area of Columbia County, which constitutes one of the largest wetland complexes in southeastern New York, is surrounded by high-quality farmland and striking scenic vistas. To date, 1,425 acres of wetlands and adjacent farmlands and forests have been protected through the concerted efforts of state agencies and private conservation organizations. Continuation of land acquisition and/or conservation easements remains a high priority for safeguarding the ecological diversity of the wetlands, as well as the agricultural viability and pastoral views of the surrounding countryside.

**FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER {49.}** – The Five Rivers Environmental Education Center is located between the rapidly growing suburban towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland in Albany County. The Center receives over 100,000 visitors annually and serves as an important wildlife preserve and popular birding area. Given that the entire area surrounding Five Rivers remains vulnerable to subdivision and development activity, opportunities for protection of public use, public access, and buffer areas remain a priority. One such opportunity includes the Phillipinkill stream corridor located north and east of the Five Rivers property, which presents potential for continued trail development already initiated by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy.

**HAND HOLLOW CONSERVATION AREA {50.}** ♦ – This Columbia County property, which is the Town of New Lebanon’s only public conservation area, now encompasses 434 acres, including a 21-acre lake, smaller ponds, perennial and seasonal streams, a great blue heron rookery, and more than 5 miles of public trails. There exists the potential to enhance this conservation area if a number of key parcels are acquired. These parcels would secure a portion of the lakefront and Hand Hollow watershed, as well as

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

contribute to the overall habitat diversity by adding extensive areas of woodland and meadows, in addition to streams, upland ponds, and wetlands.

**HELDERBERGS {51.} ♦^** –The Helderbergs protection area includes lands associated with the Helderberg Mountains, which extend diagonally from northeast Greene County, over much of western Albany County, to southwest Schenectady County. Much of this area is dominated by limestone formations, ranging from bedrock outcroppings and numerous small caves to the Helderberg Escarpment, the most prominent natural feature in Albany County and a site of geological and paleontological significance and outstanding scenic vistas. Also included in this area are forested slopes that transition into a variety of lowland habitats cut by streams draining into extensive and diverse wetlands, such as Vly Swamp and Black Creek Marsh State Wildlife Management Area. The overall landscape affords a high diversity of habitats that support a correspondingly high diversity of fauna and flora. This includes an amphibian diversity that rivals the entire New England region; two sites included on the National Audubon Society’s list of Important Bird Areas in New York State; and the 250–acre Joralemon Park, believed to have more fern species than any site of comparable size in New York State.

The Helderbergs area is also home to John Boyd Thacher State Park, which includes Thompson Lake Campground at John Boyd Thacher State Park, where there are numerous recreational opportunities; important state holdings, including Partridge Run Wildlife Management Area, Cole Hill State Forest, and Rensselaerville State Forest; the Bozen Kill corridor’s steep ravines, pristine stream course, and numerous waterfalls; and the highlands west of the escarpment, with impressive scenic views extending to the Catskills and expansive areas of farmland. In addition to each of the above individual features, connections between them are also regarded as priorities for protection.

**MOHAWK RIVER VALLEY CORRIDOR/BARGE CANAL {52.}** – Priority should be given to protecting significant scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources along the Mohawk River in addition to securing river and tributary access parcels that would enhance public enjoyment of these resources. Areas of particular concern in the Mohawk River corridor include “The Noses” in Montgomery County, two prominent landmarks of significant scenic and cultural value, and the Great Flats Aquifer in Schenectady County, designated by the EPA as one of just five Sole Source Aquifers in upstate New York. Protection efforts should also be directed toward securing buffer land adjacent to the newly created Mohawk River State Park in Schenectady County. Finally, it is also important to protect linkage parcels that contribute to the continuity of a statewide Canalway Trail system.

**OOMSDALE FARM AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE {53.} ♦** – The focal point of this project area is Oomsdale Farm, which occupies approximately 400 acres in Chatham, Columbia County, and includes high–quality farmland, significant habitat for grassland nesting birds, and spectacular scenic vistas from the high open fields. Also included in this landscape complex are the Kinderhook Lake watershed, Kinderhook Creek corridor and associated floodplains, forestland, and open grassland fields. This area represents an outstanding opportunity to preserve a productive working landscape, while protecting a sizeable expanse of nesting habitat for increasingly uncommon grassland birds, as well as the significant contributing features of the surrounding landscape.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

**REGION 4 RAIL TRAIL PROJECTS {54.}** – The greatest risk following abandonment of a rail line is the possibility that the right-of-way will be subdivided and sold off piecemeal, all but precluding any future public use that would require an intact, continuous corridor. Ensuring the long-term integrity of abandoned rail lines by conversion to recreational rail trails is, therefore, of paramount importance in the context of priorities for protection. Such rail trail projects result in multi-purpose, public pathways through urban, suburban, and rural areas that are ideal for bicycling, walking, jogging, in-line skating, and cross-country skiing, and their flat or gentle grade is conducive to wheelchair use. These trails provide safe, off-road connections between population centers, as well as linkages between parks and preserves. As a result, rail trails enhance a community's quality of life by promoting healthier lifestyles, providing environmentally friendly transportation alternatives, and stimulating local and regional economies.

There are currently seven rail trail projects in various stages of conceptual planning and development that are considered high priorities in Region 4:

- Harlem Valley Rail Trail through Columbia and Dutchess counties
- Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail in Albany County (with possible connection to the Historic Albany to Hudson Electric Trolley Trail)
- Historic Albany to Hudson Electric Trolley Trail through Rensselaer and Columbia counties (with possible connection to the Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail)
- Hoosic River Greenway Rail Trail in Rensselaer County
- Kaaterskill Rail Trail in Greene County
- Rutland Rail Trail through Rensselaer and Columbia counties (with possible connection to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail)
- Schoharie Gateway Rail Trail in Schoharie County

**RENSELAER PLATEAU {55.}** ♦^ – This area of Rensselaer County includes the fifth-largest unfragmented forest in the State and a portion of the Tomhannock Reservoir Watershed, which provides water to over 100,000 county residents. In addition to the expansive forest, the plateau supports several unique wetland communities (including sedge meadow, dwarf shrub bog, spruce-fir swamp, and kettle hole bog), an impressive mammal diversity not typical of the greater Capital District (including black bear, fisher, otter, bobcat, and moose), and is included on National Audubon Society's list of Important Bird Areas in New York. The Rensselaer Plateau's large forest blocks serve as core areas from which wildlife corridors to other forested areas extend and, according to the Natural Heritage Program, provide potential refuge for wildlife moving from southern areas or lower elevations in response to climate change. The Nature Conservancy has also identified the plateau as a significant "Resilient Site for Terrestrial Conservation." Protection of this area would contribute to a long-term vision shared by a number of organizations to establish an open space corridor and trail system across the plateau connecting Dyken Pond Center, Grafton Lakes State Park, Pittstown State Forest, Capital District Wildlife Management Area, Dickinson Hill Fire Tower, and other recreation and environmental education facilities. The goal to protect this area and integral connecting corridors has brought together municipal officials, private landowners, representatives of the forest products industry, and various environmental groups. Their concerted efforts have led to the preparation of a comprehensive

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan and the initiation of a multi-year effort to acquire conservation easements on tens of thousands of acres of forestland on the plateau, using Forest Legacy and other funding programs.

**SCHOHARIE VALLEY CORRIDOR {56.} ♦** – The Schoharie Valley Corridor is one of the oldest settled landscapes in the state and a setting of dramatic scenery and significant agricultural production. Some of the highest priority areas for protection are located from the Town of Esperance south to Gilboa, as well as along the Schoharie Creek and its tributaries throughout Montgomery and Schoharie counties. Of particular concern is conserving farmland throughout the valley; preserving Native American archaeological sites and the remains of pre-Revolutionary War forts; and protecting the narrow band of karst formations and associated water reserves that extend through the north portion of this area. Within this band are a number of larger cave systems that support hibernating bats; protection of these caves will directly contribute to the management of recreational caving and, therefore, help to control the spread of white-nose syndrome. Finally, protection of trail corridors and greenways in support of local trail initiatives, such as a current proposal extending from SUNY Cobleskill to Richmondville, will provide an important recreational complement to this area.

**SUSQUEHANNA RIVER VALLEY CORRIDOR {57.} ♦^** – This major river valley corridor, which encompasses portions of Otsego and western Delaware counties, is an important component of the federal priority Chesapeake Bay drainage basin, the largest river basin on the Atlantic Seaboard. The Susquehanna River itself contributes the largest proportion of fresh water flowing into Chesapeake Bay, and the quality of this water, which supports a significant warm water fishery, is a direct function of open space protection in the corridor. Protection of parcels along the Susquehanna, including critical overlook sites, could provide needed public access to the river and its tributaries, thereby enhancing recreational opportunities while providing economic benefits to local communities. Specific sites of recreational importance include Brookwood Point, located on Otsego Lake, the Susquehanna's headwaters, and a key access point for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, as well as the Oaks Creek Blueway, beginning at Deowongo Island in Canadarago Lake and extending to Compton Bridge, just south of Otsego Lake. The majority (60 to almost 80 percent) of lands surrounding the Susquehanna's main tributaries are actively farmed, with a substantial proportion of the acreage containing prime agricultural soils. Also within this area is Franklin Mountain, which encompasses a ridgeline separating the Susquehanna and Delaware River watersheds in northern Delaware County. Franklin Mountain provides outstanding opportunities for viewing seasonal raptor migrations, as evidenced by the area's inclusion in National Audubon's list of Important Bird Areas in New York State.

**WOLF HOLLOW/HOFFMAN'S FAULT {58.}** – Hoffman's Fault provides a remarkable display of a north-south geological fault line that extends for several miles through western Schenectady County. Wolf Hollow, the best known portion of the fault, presents a dramatic example of the displacement of rock layers resulting from earthquake activity 100+ million years ago. The exposed rock strata on both sides of the fault line make Wolf Hollow a popular outdoor classroom for geology and earth science

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

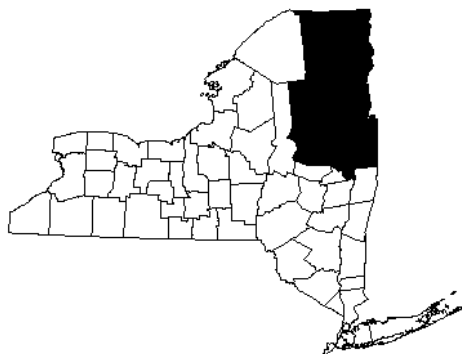
classes from around the Northeast. This area's unique contrasting bedrock and varying exposure to the sun on the east and west sides of the fault support a rich plant diversity with locally rare and uncommon ferns and mosses and a recently rediscovered moss once thought to be extirpated from the state. Historically, the hollow formed an important natural passage for Native American travels between the Mohawk River and the upper Hudson River. Wolf Hollow was also the site of a decisive Native American battle in 1669 that may have signaled the true "last of the Mohicans," following an important Mohawk victory over this Algonkian tribe. Numerous artifacts have been uncovered in archaeological digs conducted in the hollow indicating its importance to Native American culture. Today, the surrounding landscape retains much of its rural character, and while some land is protected under conservation easements held by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, much of this unique geological, ecological, and historic site remains vulnerable to encroachment by large lot development.

**WOODLAWN PINE BARRENS–WETLANDS COMPLEX {59.} ♦** – This area of Schenectady County is situated immediately northwest of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and includes several remnant features of the Pine Bush, including sand plain and dune formations, pitch pine–scrub oak barrens, and historic Karner blue butterfly habitat which, while currently unoccupied, may be restored as a future reintroduction site. The area also supports several important wetlands forming a unique complex of pine barrens and wetland habitats. Although this area is outside the protection area designated by the Albany Pine Bush Commission, its attributes have been recognized as complementary to the Pine Bush Preserve and protection worthy. Owners of public lands in this area are encouraged to cooperate with state and other agencies to protect this habitat. Recent local efforts have included creation of the 135-acre Woodlawn Preserve by the City of Schenectady and 24 acres of parkland in the Town of Niskayuna.

## REGIONS 4 & 5

**HOOSICK RIVER CORRIDOR {60.} ♦** – This inter-regional river corridor and its tributaries, located in Rensselaer and Washington counties, drain an extensive area encompassing lands in three states and form a significant portion of the upper Hudson River drainage north of the estuary. The corridor includes highly productive farmland and timberland, as well as important ecological, cultural, and scenic resources. Protection of this area will also enhance public recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, birding, and canoeing. In addition, a portion of the corridor overlies a major aquifer and includes several key recharge areas. This area has the potential for development of a major greenway across northern Rensselaer and southern Washington counties, linking the Rensselaer Plateau with the Green Mountains in Vermont and the Taconic Mountains along the Massachusetts–NY state line. Local initiatives toward such a greenway have already been started by the Town of Hoosick and the Village of Hoosick Falls. Furthermore, the Hoosick River is already a DEC–designated Public Fishing River, and DEC should continue efforts to obtain public fishing rights.

## REGION 5 / EASTERN ADIRONACKS / LAKE CHAMPLAIN



The northern Hudson River runs from its source at Lake Tear of the Clouds in the Adirondacks as a sometimes wild whitewater river, now largely controlled by dams. The lowlands of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Champlain flank the massive Adirondack Mountains. The legendary High Peaks in the eastern Adirondacks, famous lakes such as Lake George, Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, and ski areas such as Whiteface Mountain, draw millions of visitors to this area. Lake Champlain and Saratoga are also popular destination areas for visitors from around the

world. The natural beauty of the Adirondacks led to the protection of the first wilderness areas in 1885 to leave lands as forever wild. This was the beginning of the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

The forts and battlefields from the French and Indian War, the War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War, highlight the strategic importance of this area during America's battle for independence. Centuries of maritime history have been preserved in the many wrecks in Lake Champlain. During the 19th century, Saratoga and the Adirondacks were summer resorts for the wealthy, who built mansions and rustic Adirondack great camps.

To read the Region 5 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

**ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN CLUB LANDS {61.}**<sup>^</sup> – The state and the Adirondack Mountain Club are currently engaged in discussions regarding construction of a new visitors service facility and approximately 300-car parking lot on the club's Heart Lake property to provide public access to the Van Hoevenberg and Indian Pass hiking trails. It is currently envisioned that this new facility will be effectuated by means of a long-term lease instead of a fee or easement. However, the property is being proposed as an addition to this version of the Open Space Plan in the eventuality that state acquisition of an easement from the Adirondack Mountain Club is determined to be necessary for completion of the aforementioned facility and parking lot and that conveyance is approved by the board of directors of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

**AGRICULTURAL LANDS {62.}** – For more than 200 years, agriculture has played an important role in shaping the settlement patterns, working landscapes and rural heritage of the region. Throughout the region, important farmland protection projects have been initiated through state, municipal and non-government organizations using conservation easements and other tools. These projects support the region's agricultural industry, maintain its agricultural character and provide vital wildlife and grassland habitats. New York State should focus attention and resources on the protection of agricultural lands for working farms, commensurate with protection of forested lands for working forests. Existing farmland under consideration should be protected by the purchase of an easement rather than fee simple acquisition to enhance future use of the land for agriculture. Funds must

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

continue to be allocated to state, municipal and non-government organization programs that protect agricultural lands in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Saratoga and Washington counties.

**BIG CEDAR SWAMP {63.} ♦** –This large contiguous Class I wetland complex in Warren County features a variety of wetland habitat types. Habitat diversity throughout the 900+-acre area supports more than 149 species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, at least five of which are designated as species of special concern.

**BOESELAGER FORESTRY {64.}** – This project consists of three parcels totaling 5,664 acres, including a 2,038-acre parcel in the Town of Black Brook and a 3,426-acre parcel in the Towns of Saranac and Dannemora, both of which border State Forest Preserve lands as well as existing timber easements. These two projects are proposed as working forest easements with public recreation rights. The third parcel is 16 miles of railroad bed equaling 200 acres. The third proposed project calls for the acquisition of a recreational easement for public access. The railroad connects the Village of Dannemora and the hamlet of Lyon Mountain.

**FINCH WOODLANDS {65.}** – The 22,000-acre Boreas Pond Tract are the only lands of the original 161,000 acres of this open space priority project remain to be protected. These lands are part of the 69,000 acres of forests with more than 180 miles of rivers and streams, 175 lakes and ponds, and six mountains taller than 2,000 feet that the State has agreed to purchase.

These lands, currently the property of the Nature Conservancy, were once owned by paper manufacturer Finch, Pruyn & Company, and have high ecological and recreational values. The lands include extensive wildlife habitat, abundant water resources, and spectacular views, and will provide outdoor recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, wildlife watching, and more.

Currently, the State has purchased 47,600 acres of these lands including: 6,200-acre MacIntyre East Tract, 5,770-acre MacIntyre West Tract, 18,300-acre Essex Chain Tract, 2,300-acre OK Slip Falls Tract, 1,590-acre Casey Brook Tract, 1,250-acre Thousand-Acre Swamp Tract, 3,880-acres Benson Road (aka Tomantown) Tract and the 2,540-acres Saddles Tract.

The State previously purchased conservation easements on 91,000 of productive timberlands. The easement allows continued timber harvest and camp leasing on the lands and includes some public recreation opportunities.

In its entirety the project will protect approximately 161,000 acres containing 415 miles of rivers, 16,000 acres of wetlands, more than 90 mountains and 300 lakes and ponds spread across numerous parcels in 6 counties and 31 towns in the Adirondacks.

**FLOODWOOD (NORTHERN NEW JERSEY COUNCIL BOY SCOUT CAMP) {66.}** – This project includes two parcels of land—one comprising 120 acres situated on the west side of Rollins Pond and the other comprising 260 acres situated on the west side of West Pine Pond in the Town of Tupper Lake, Franklin County. Both parcels are surrounded by Forest Preserve and are owned by the Northern New Jersey County Council, Inc./Boy Scouts of America, Inc. The state has first option with the Boy Scouts to

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

acquire the land because of an earlier agreement when it acquired 4,990 acres in 1990. This additional 380 acres will be added to the Forest Preserve. The Town of Tupper Lake has approved this project.

**FOLLENSBY PARK {67.}** – A 14,600-acre forested tract is located in the Towns of Altamont and Harrietstown, Franklin County. The area contains the 920-acre Follensby Pond, a historic bald eagle nesting site, and is bordered by the Raquette River, a classified scenic river, for approximately ten miles.

**FOUR PEAKS FOREST {68.}** – This 620-acre property in the Towns of Jay and Wilmington, Essex County, is adjacent to the Beaver Brook Tract within the Wilmington Wild Forest. The property, which includes both natural and cultural resources, contains numerous recreational trails and vistas in proximity to a popular network of multi-use trails on the adjoining state land. Adding this parcel to the Forest Preserve has the potential to expand hunting, mountain biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, and other outdoor recreation opportunities for the public. The property and the trails will link the communities of Jay and Wilmington to common public resources on which the local recreation and tourism economy depends.

**Huckleberry Mountain Tract {69.}** – This 836-acre tract is located at the end of Alden Avenue in the Town of Warrensburg. The property borders the Lake George Wild Forest Hudson River Recreation Area on ten sides. The Hudson River Recreation Area is an intensively used area that currently can only be accessed from the south via Road in the Town of Luzerne. The property would provide a northern access via Alden Avenue in the Town of Warrensburg. The additional access and recreational opportunities should distribute the current intense use in the Hudson River Recreation Area over a larger area. The property can also provide additional protection of a section of the Hudson River that is classified “Recreational” under the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Act. Due to the above benefits, the Huckleberry Mountain Tract rated very high under the Enhancement of Public Lands (Consolidation) form.

### HUDSON RIVER PROJECTS {70.}

- **Champlain Canal/Hudson River Corridor** – From Waterford to Whitehall, the Champlain Canal is an underused resource serving Saratoga and Washington counties. The majority of public ownership along its length is under the jurisdiction of the NYS Canal Corporation. Additional open space acquisitions should focus on recreational water access, habitat protection along the Hudson River, completion of the Champlain Canalway Trail and protection of the historic viewsheds of the battlefields, siege and surrender of Saratoga in 1777.
- **Hudson River Access and Wildlife Habitat** – Lands that will improve public access to the Hudson River and its shoreline, as well as protect wildlife habitat in the river corridor.

### LAKE CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED {71.} ♦ ^

- **Champlain Area Trails System** – A community-based program to create hiking/skiing/biking trails to link Champlain Valley communities, connect people with nature, and promote economic

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

vitality. These trails will connect to other trails systems in the Adirondack Mountains, Champlain Canalway, Lake George, Vermont, and Quebec. Protection of natural communities, natural corridors, and farmland along the trails will enhance enjoyment of them, attract more users, support the historic hamlets, and boost local economies.

- **Lake Champlain Shoreline and Wetlands** – In addition to these projects, the Regional Advisory Committee (committee) had previously endorsed five priority wetland projects along the Lake Champlain Plain, which were to have been acquired through funding from the North American Wetland Conservation Act. Two of these projects (Poultney River Complex and Webb Royce Swamp) have been completed, and a third is in progress (Kings Bay). The two remaining projects include The Narrows and Freedom Marsh. Additional Lake Champlain wetlands projects which are being contemplated as a “Phase III” were endorsed by the committee. These include Monty Bay, Dead Creek, Bulwagga Bay, Huckleberry Mountain Marsh (also known as Freedom Marsh) and South Bay. These wetland projects reflect priorities along the Lake Champlain Plain only and are not intended to represent the wetland protection needs of the rest of Region 5.
- **Lake Champlain Watershed Natural Communities and Important Species** – The Lake Champlain watershed contains many diverse natural communities and important plant and animal species. Conservation of high-quality examples of the watershed’s natural communities and habitat for endangered and threatened species, species of special concern, and “species of greatest conservation need” as identified in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for New York State is needed.
- **Fort Montgomery and Associated Uplands** – Approximately 300 acres of land within the Village of Rouses Point, at the extreme northeast corner of New York State, bordered by Canada to the north and Lake Champlain to the east. Property contains significant remnants of a stone fort constructed in 1844 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The majority of the parcel is wetland, much of it NYS Regulated Class I freshwater wetland.
- **Sherman Property** – Four-hundred-forty-five acres located in the Town of Westport, includes a Forest Preserve addition of 300 acres and a conservation easement on the remaining 145 acres of farmland and forest. Protection of these lands will advance development of a hiking trail between Westport and Essex, provide a trail to the summit of Twin Hill, preserve rare plants and an important natural community, conserve an historic farm, and protect the view from Coon Mountain Preserve, owned by the Adirondack Land Trust.
- **Tub Mill Pond Forest** – This 1,215 acre property in the Town of Moriah, Essex County, is adjacent to forest preserve lands in the Hammond Pond Wild Forest. The property contains a large lake, a number of smaller ponds and wetlands. There are significant shorelines along the lake and islands and a healthy naturally reproducing fish community. Bald eagles are regularly sighted on the property.

### LAKE GEORGE WATERSHED {72.}^

- **Undeveloped Lake George Shore** – Lake George is the “Queen of the American Lakes.” Its eastern shore and sections of its western shore still remain undeveloped and represent significant ecosystems and scenic panoramas.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Pilot Knob** – Located in the Town of Fort Ann, Washington County, this 400-acre tract will provide public access to the summit of Pilot Knob Mountain from Pilot Knob Road on the southeast side of Lake George. It has an infrastructure of trails with panoramic views of the lake and will add recreational opportunity to the Lake George area.
- **Lake George Watershed** – Undeveloped upland tracts within the Lake George watershed that must be protected to ensure protection of the lake’s water quality, watershed, and rare or threatened plants, animals, and natural communities.
- **Lake George Waterway Access** – Parcels along the Lake George shoreline that provide public access to the lake.
- **Prospect Mountain Tract** – This 1,450-acre parcel is located on the southern slopes of Prospect Mountain in the Town of Lake George. It borders the Forest Preserve and town recreation lands. Development of this parcel, much of which lies within the West Brook drainage, could increase stormwater runoff and sedimentation in Lake George. The Town of Lake George supports this project.

### SARATOGA COUNTY {73.}

- **Dwaas Kill Natural Area and Watershed** – This nature preserve features a complex of aquatic, wetland, and upland habitat associated with the middle reaches of the Dwaas Kill stream system and its tributaries. The preserve will protect approximately 500 acres within the rapidly growing town of Clifton Park in Saratoga County. It also will afford approximately five miles of stream corridor protection, assist in preservation of water quality and protect one of the town’s major aquifers. Hemlock-laden ravines, a large wetlands complex and relatively undisturbed riparian habitat provide a solid diversity of native flora and fauna, plus important wildlife habitat and travel corridors.
- **Kayderosseras and Fish Creek Corridor/Saratoga Lake** ♦ – One of the major tributaries of the Hudson River is the Kayderosseras, Saratoga Lake and Fish Creek (one flows into the next). They flow through five towns, three villages and the City of Saratoga Springs in Saratoga County. This major water corridor through the center of the county is important for recreation, fishing, and watershed protection, and provides significant wetlands and natural habitat. Increased public access to the creeks and the lake is the goal of the surrounding municipalities and the county’s Green Infrastructure Plan. Protection efforts can be undertaken by state, county and municipal jurisdictions or by other organizations and could take the route of either fee or easement acquisitions.
- **Mid-County Trail System** – A designated county trail system traverses four towns and a village in the center of Saratoga County and has the potential to link some of the major residential population centers. Protection of the wetlands and natural corridors along the trail and establishment of trail linkages to residential areas will advance recreational use and enjoyment. There are opportunities to link the trail to existing DEC, county, town, and Saratoga P.L.A.N. properties.
- **Vischer Ferry Preserve/Mohawk Corridor** ^– Located in southern portion of Saratoga County, the Vischer Ferry Preserve is a priority open space area for the Town of Clifton Park, designated an



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Important Bird Area by Audubon and a New York State Bird Conservation Area. The preserve, managed by the town and owned by the Canal Corporation, has wetland and forest habitats as well as Mohawk River shoreline. There is opportunity for additional parcels from private landowners to be added to the preserve complex. Continued acquisition of available parcels is part of the town's open space plan and would provide increased river access.

- **Saratoga County Agricultural Lands** – Throughout Saratoga County, an active farmland conservation easement program has been created with assistance from the County Farmland Preservation and Open Space Fund. Throughout the county, important farmland protection projects have been initiated under the umbrella of a county-wide program. These projects maintain the character of the county and also provide vital grassland habitats. NYS should focus commensurate attention and resources in NYS Region 5 on protection of agricultural lands for working farms—similar to protection of forested lands for working forests. Any reasonably viable farmland under consideration should be protected, whenever possible, by purchase of an easement rather than fee simple acquisition, to enhance future use of the land for agriculture.
- **Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park (WWPP) ♦** – The Town of Wilton developed a plan to create a 2,500-acre park in the Saratoga Sand Plains found in the center of town to provide recreational and aesthetic open space to complement future development in one of the fastest growing counties (Saratoga) in New York State. A mixture of acquisitions and easements involving local, state and federal funding is being used to accomplish this ambitious project. The Town of Wilton is outside the Adirondack Park. It provides an important habitat for the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly, along with threatened and species of special concern, including Blanding's and spotted turtles, frosted elfin butterflies, spadefoot toads, eastern hognose snakes, and American woodcock, to name a few.
- **Blanding's Turtle Recovery Area ♦** – Blanding's turtles, a threatened species in New York, were found in one area in central-eastern Saratoga County on lands within the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park study area. This localized area in the Towns of Wilton and Northumberland is facing significant pressure from subdivisions. DEC will acquire properties, in fee or under easement, containing Blanding's turtle breeding, feeding and overwintering habitat. These properties will become part of the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area, which also encompasses the WWPP.
- **Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Units ♦** – Three areas in Region 5 support by far the majority of the remaining populations of the state and federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. These have been designated as Recovery Units in a draft state recovery plan, and two are also sites necessary for achieving recovery goals under the federal recovery plan for this species. Acquisition and easements are needed in conjunction with management agreements and other land protection tools to halt the decline of the Karner blue and to create the long-term self-sustaining populations necessary to remove the species from the endangered list. The recovery units in Region 5 include but are not limited to:
  - **Saratoga West Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Unit** – This area contains the largest single Karner blue butterfly habitat area (Saratoga County Airport) as well as several smaller population sites. The unit includes habitat and areas suitable for habitat restoration, which can be used to link

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- populations. It is one of three target areas for establishment of a viable population as part of recovery at the national level.
- **Saratoga Sand Plains Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Unit** – This unit includes the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, which has already been included as an Open Space project, and additional properties in the Town of Northumberland. Within the unit boundaries are habitat and areas suitable for habitat restoration, which can be used to expand and link populations. This unit is one of three target areas for establishment of a viable population as part of recovery at the national level. DEC acquisitions in this recovery unit will be included as part of the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area.
  - **Queensbury Sand Plains Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Unit** – This area, located in Warren County, contains the northernmost populations of the Karner blue in the state. The unit includes habitat and area suitable for habitat restoration, which can be used to link populations. Management over the long term is necessary to increase and preserve Karner blue butterfly populations.
  - **Round Lake and Anthony Kill Corridor** – The area around Round Lake is identified in the Saratoga Green Infrastructure Plan as exhibiting all four of the green infrastructure theme areas: natural systems, working landscapes, recreation and trails, and cultural landscapes. The lake itself is important for recreation, fishing, and watershed protection and provides wetland and natural habitat protection. Round Lake is a well-known resource for non-motorized boats and is an excellent warm water fishery. The Anthony Kill flows east from Round Lake into the Hudson River and contains class II-III rapids and a mix of natural and urban surroundings. Protection and public access efforts have been undertaken by state, county, municipal and private partnerships.
  - **Sacandaga Corridor** – Lands in the Town of Hadley adjacent to Stewart’s Bridge Reservoir and the Sacandaga River below the Stewart’s Bridge Reservoir Dam that are currently owned by the Open Space Conservancy and National Grid. The properties include acreage near the shoreline of the reservoir adjacent to FERC required public recreational access to the water, and along the river adjacent to the Town of Hadley Whitewater Recreation area. State ownership of the properties will enhance existing recreational opportunities and protect the viewshed from the river corridor. The Open Space Conservancy is currently seeking to sell all of its properties—four parcels totaling 281 acres—to the State. National Grid has offered to sell their properties—totaling 197 acres—in the past.
  - **Southeastern Adirondack Foothills** ♦ ^– The Palmertown and Luzerne ranges lie immediately west of booming “Northway Corridor” towns such as Wilton and Queensbury, and in proximity to the tourism centers of Saratoga and Lake George. This area is the ecological transition zone between the Adirondacks and the Hudson Valley, resulting in high biodiversity, and includes the Moreau Lake Forest Important Bird Area. Existing public lands include Lincoln Mountain State Forest, Moreau Lake State Park, the City of Glens Falls watershed, Luzerne State Campground, and Prospect Mountain. The Palmertown Trail, connecting Moreau Lake State Park with the City of Saratoga Springs, is an important component of the county-wide trail system identified in the county’s Green Infrastructure Plan. (Portions of this project are located in Warren County.)

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Stony Creek Reservoir Natural Area, Town of Clifton Park** – Stony Creek Reservoir and its watershed lands cover more than 1,000 acres in the Town of Clifton Park, representing a significant, large block of a natural area in the eastern, more developed part of the town. The reservoir and surrounding land is owned and protected by the Latham Water District (Town of Colonie) as a back-up public water supply, but no public access is available to any of it. This open space area includes the northern reach of the Stony Creek as it flows into the reservoir, surrounding wetlands, Stony Creek groundwater aquifer recharge lands, fish and wildlife habitat, woodlands and opportunities for passive recreation. A significant fisheries habitat is associated with the Stony Creek reservoir and Stony Kill (stream –Class A). The Stony Creek Reservoir is the largest water body in Clifton Park and is identified as a specific plan goal and long-range opportunity for protection of water supply and natural resources in the Town of Clifton Park Open Space Plan.

### WASHINGTON COUNTY {74.} ♦

- **Batten Kill Corridor** – Preserve the variety of open space resources, such as working farmlands and timberlands, scenic views, wetlands, unique areas and significant fish and wildlife habitats; and work to enhance public recreation, such as hunting, fishing, birding, and canoeing, in this river corridor in the Towns of Salem, Jackson, Greenwich and Easton in Washington County. State fee acquisitions and easements will be only two of the numerous means used to preserve open space, protect natural resources and enhance public recreation. Open space conservation, including preservation of working farmlands within the corridor, may also be accomplished by using the means and methods, such as purchase of development rights, identified in Washington County's Farmland Protection Plan. The Batten Kill is a DEC-designated Public Fishing River, and DEC will continue to seek to obtain public fishing rights.
- **Washington County Grasslands** ^– Four-thousand acres of the 13,000-acre Washington County Important Bird Area located in the Towns of Fort Edward, Argyle and Kingsbury in Washington County. The grasslands provide wildlife habitat for endangered, threatened and declining grassland nesting birds; lands for agriculture; open space for public recreation and hunting; and the rural character and scenic vistas of the three towns.

Protection of the grasslands will be achieved through a combination of land acquisition and voluntary grasslands stewardship strategies. This approach will use: 1) Purchase of parcels by fee title and purchase of conservation and management easements from willing landowners; 2) Voluntary agreements among the state, conservation and agricultural land trusts and land owners to include farm properties throughout the Washington County Grassland Important Bird Area; and 3) Town land-use planning and zoning ordinances to encourage open space conservation in the Towns of Fort Edward and Kingsbury. Approximately 2,000 acres of land in the core of the grasslands will be purchased in fee by the State of New York and will be managed to sustain a grasslands ecosystem. Another approximately 2,000 acres surrounding and buffering the core will remain private land protected under conservation and management easements. Grasslands stewardship agreements with willing property owners will be sought throughout the Important Bird Area.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Hoosic River Corridor** – Conserve the variety of open space resources, such as working farmland and timberlands, scenic views, wetlands, unique areas and significant fish and wildlife habitats; and work to enhance public recreation, such as hunting fishing, birding and canoeing, in this river corridor in the towns of White Creek and Cambridge in Washington County. State fee acquisitions and easements will be only two of the numerous means used to conserve open space, protect natural resources and enhance public recreation. Open space conservation, including protection of working farmland within the corridor, may also be accomplished by using the means and methods, such as purchase of development rights, identified in Washington County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The Hoosic River is a DEC–designated Public Fishing River, and DEC will continue to seek to obtain public fishing rights.

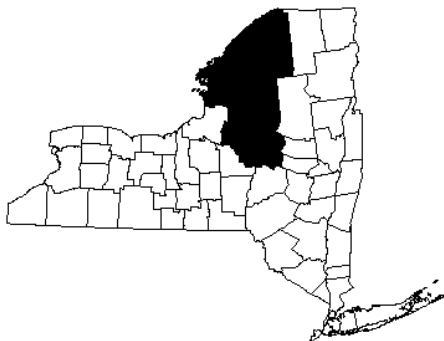
## REGIONS 5 & 6

**NORTHERN FLOW RIVER CORRIDORS {75.}** – Preserve the open space character and enhance public use of important northern flow river corridors and adjacent lands. The following corridors have been chosen at this time: the Deer, St. Regis, Grasse, Oswegatchie, Raquette and Little Rivers within the Adirondack Park, all of which contain significant stretches of high–quality recreational water particularly suited for canoeing and angling. Progress has been made in Region 6 with the recent addition of 30 acres of fee lands on the Raquette River.

- **Whitney Park** – A 36,000–acre property in Hamilton County that has been devoted to forest and wildlife management for over 100 years and contains enormous outdoor recreational potential.

**BOG RIVER/BEAVER RIVER HEADWATER COMPLEX {76.}** – The Bog River/Beaver River Headwater Complex is an assemblage of remote forestland and lakes with streams and wetlands that flow primarily into the Bog and Beaver rivers. The large lakes in this complex, including Lows Lake, Bog Lake, Round Lake and Lake Lila, are recognized for their scenic value and recreation opportunities. Smaller ponds and large wetland assemblages offer important aquatic habitat and hydrologic connectivity. These vast forests hold the landscape together in a way that is rare in the highly developed Northeast. The complex also enhances the region's ecological integrity and provides economic returns through both timber management and recreational opportunities. Ownership within the complex is primarily Forest Preserve and large private holdings, including land acquired by The Nature Conservancy from International Paper. Natural resource protection within the complex should be accomplished through a combination of “Working Forest Easements,” Forest Preserve additions and private stewardship.

## REGION 6/WESTERN ADIRONACKS



The varied landscapes of our state's northwestern region include the western Adirondack Mountains and the Tug Hill Plateau, which have some of the most remote areas in the state. The Lake Ontario shoreline has a wealth of beaches, rocky shores and wetlands. Inland from the lakeshore are many unusual ecological communities, notably the strange barren limestone pavements with their unique plant communities. In the southern part of the region, in the Mohawk Valley, is a remarkable remnant of the Ice Age, the dunes of the Rome Sand Plains,

which harbor pockets of Ice Age plant communities.

The Mohawk Valley did not become fully settled until the Erie Canal was built to provide a transportation corridor linking Albany with the Great Lakes. The shallow rocky Mohawk River was difficult to navigate and was largely bypassed by the Erie Canal, which in places actually crossed over the river as navigable aqueducts. Before the first Erie Canal, westbound travelers on the Mohawk had to stop at what is now the City of Romer to portage over to Wood Creek, the next link in the route to the Great Lakes. Fort Stanwix was built to guard this portage, which became of great strategic importance during the wars for independence.

To read the Region 6 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html)

**BLACK CREEK WATERSHED {77.}** – This project will focus on enhancing or consolidating existing public lands under the jurisdiction of the New York State Thruway Authority on Black Creek. These lands are important for watershed protection and for public recreation, such as canoeing and fishing. The project runs from County Rte. 112 down to Hinckley Reservoir in the Towns of Russia and Ohio in Herkimer County, where the state owns lands along the Black Creek. Any DEC or OPRHP land acquisition would be done in concert with or with the approval of the town.

**BLACK RIVER VALLEY AND CORRIDOR {78.}** ♦ – Preserve the open space character, public recreational use and ecological connectivity values of the land within the Black River Valley and along the Black River corridor. The Black River Valley supports a broad range of working and ecologically significant landscapes and separates the unique forested landscapes of Tug Hill and the Adirondacks. Protection of key parcels of forest and farm lands to facilitate movement of wildlife and plant species between the Adirondacks and Tug Hill is important for a variety of reasons, including genetic exchange within a species, biodiversity and providing corridors as avenues for species movement in the event of long-term climatic change. Studies underway will help to better identify the important areas in this valley needed to maintain, protect and enhance existing connectivity.

The Black River flows from its headwaters in the forested southwestern Adirondacks, through the rural agricultural lands between Tug Hill and the Adirondacks, through the urban settings of

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Watertown and into Lake Ontario. It provides a riverine corridor used for fishing, canoeing, whitewater rafting, kayaking and scenic viewing along its 114-mile length, as well as energy generation and water supply. It economically, socially and environmentally links the communities that line its banks. This project began with an 1,850-acre conservation easement on the Black River in the Towns of Boonville and Forestport, which provides public recreational access and helps enhance wildlife movement while continuing the land's productivity in a working landscape. An additional 518 acres of land were purchased in 2013 to become a new State Forest. There is a pending additional conservation easement that would be contiguous to these two other parcels, bringing a total of about 3,000 acres under protection in this unique Adirondack-Tug Hill Wildlife Connectivity Corridor.

The Black River is a designated New York State Blueway Trail with the support of 37 communities along the corridor. These communities and state agency partners have developed integrated objectives for future use and development of the corridor, including open space projects to protect small forested tracts with high public values, riparian buffers and adjacent productive agricultural lands, and public access and multi-use trails to enhance tourism and public enjoyment of the river.

The Black River Trail Scenic Byway also parallels the Black River Canal in Rome through Oneida, Lewis and Jefferson counties to the mouth of the river on Lake Ontario. With the support of communities along the byway, a pending amendment (S. 3494/A. 4637) to State Highway Law would formally designate this byway. The byway provides access opportunities and marketing/promotional benefits to the entire Black River Valley.

Through both the Blueway Trail and Scenic Byway, there are tremendous opportunities for small-scale acquisitions and development that provide access to the Black River and scenic overlooks along the corridor. In addition, there are numerous opportunities for trail development and park development throughout the valley that should be given priority.

**FORT DRUM ARMY COMPATIBLE USE BUFFER PROJECT {79.} ♦^** – Fort Drum encompasses more than 100,000 acres of land, 80% of which is undeveloped, including a mix of forests, grassland and abandoned farmland reverting to forest, which is frequented by wildlife from bald eagles to bear. At the same time, these lands are being used extensively for military training for primarily the 10th Mountain Division light infantry units. Lands adjacent to Fort Drum comprise a similar mix of habitats and cover types and, in addition, active farmland. Together, these lands comprise a very large sparsely developed rural area where residences are few and the public road network sparse. Fort Drum lands are managed for military use but with a strong natural resource conservation ethic. In addition, much of the lands are open to public recreation in cooperation with DEC.

The conservation/open space value of Fort Drum is, of course, only part of the Fort's value to the North Country. The economic and cultural values of the Fort and its soldiers, military families and employees greatly benefit the entire region. Recent increases in the number of soldiers highlight the need for more areas for training. In addition, existing training areas must be protected from activities on adjacent private lands, such as housing development, that could end up limiting the kind of training that can be done on lands adjacent to developments.

In 2009, Ft. Drum entered into a partnership with Ducks Unlimited and the Tug Hill Tomorrow

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Land Trust to address these training and conservation needs through a unique program called the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program. The program provides funding for purchasing conservation easements on lands adjacent to Fort Drum, while also enhancing the conservation values the fort and adjacent lands provide. Many of the ACUB projects are on working farms, and this program is a win-win, providing needed income to support local agriculture, reducing encroachment which protects military training opportunities, and forwarding the mission of conservation organizations.

There are two ways this conservation partnership provides significant benefits to the dual goals of maintaining/enhancing training capabilities and open space/conservation values. First, purchase of lands adjacent to the fort in fee or easement for conservation purposes would provide a buffer to development. Development, if not controlled, would in time encroach upon or otherwise interfere with military training. Also, land could be acquired in fee or easement as mitigation opportunities for wetlands and other environmental values impacted by development of facilities on the Fort so serve a dual purpose of mitigation and buffer. Second, communities could establish land-use controls which only allow development compatible with the fort's training activities. As previously recommended in the report, all local government real property taxes should be paid for in fee and easement lands acquired by NYS.

**HERKIMER HOME VIEWSHED {80.}** – The project is designed to protect the vistas to the north of the historic General Nicholas Herkimer Home and 165 acres in buffer properties. Herkimer Home Historic Site currently contains the house where General Herkimer lived until his death from wounds received in the important Battle of Oriskany in 1777.

**INMAN GULF {81.}** – The gulf is a unique geological and biological site on the Tug Hill Plateau in Lewis and Jefferson counties, from Barnes Corners to Rodman. Acquisition in fee and/or easement of private parcels bordering the gulf is needed to protect the integrity of the area.

**MASSAWEPIE MIRE {82.}** ♦^ – Preserve this unique ecological community consisting of the Adirondacks' largest fen with adjacent eskers, kames and kettle ponds. Subdivision and development of these parcels would compromise the ecological integrity of the area. A portion of the mire and adjacent lands are protected by a recent easement with the State. The remaining and larger portion of the mire and adjacent lands are in private ownership. Should they become available on the real estate market, they could be subject to development pressure. The current owners have occupied or owned the property since the late 1880s, and there has not been any substantial development on the property in the last 100 years, nor is any planned. The owners have worked with DEC foresters and private professional forestry consultants to provide the best forest management practices and an excellent level of stewardship. In addition, they have provided public access for snowmobiling in cooperation with the St Lawrence County Snowmobile Association and local clubs. There is no interest on the part of the owners to sell, subdivide, or develop any part of the property, and it is expected that the current use and protection of the property will remain stable.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

**MOOSE RIVER CORRIDOR {83.}^** – Preserve the open space character and enhance public use of the Moose River Corridor in Herkimer, Oneida and Lewis counties from Rondaxe Lake and the Fulton Chain downstream to the Black River. Acquisition may consist of a combination of fee and easement holdings.

**NORTH POND TRACT {84.}** – This block of 1,474 acres of private land is bordered by the Independence River Wild Forest to the west and south, and the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness to the southeast. It includes the 12-acre North Pond, large areas of wetlands, and North Pond Inlet, which feeds directly into Big Otter Lake. The project area has been historically used as a private hunting club with little development and with responsible forest management under the Forest Tax Law (480a). This property may be subject to development or subdivision pressures should it become available on the open market. Protection would ensure maintaining the integrity of the adjoining Wild Forest and Wilderness areas, in addition to further safeguarding the tributaries feeding into Big Otter Lake.

**ROME SAND PLAINS {85.} ♦** – Acreage owned by DEC and The Nature Conservancy should be added to protect the unique ecological, historical, geological and scenic characteristics of the area and provide for public use opportunities. To date, 1,372 acres have been acquired in fee by NYS. There are additional parcels slated for purchase from The Nature Conservancy. A successful lupine restoration program and new trail development supported by volunteers are recent accomplishments in this area.

**ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ISLANDS, SHORELINES AND WETLANDS {86.} ♦^** – On the St. Lawrence River, including the Thousand Islands portion, conservation priority should go to lands adjacent to existing State Parks; undeveloped islands and shoals, large tracts of forest, grassland, and wetland habitat adjacent to tributaries of the St. Lawrence River; lands with high recreational potential, and scenic, undeveloped shoreline.

A relatively small portion of lands on and near the St. Lawrence River today are in public ownership. Different land protection strategies may be required, including but not limited to fee ownership and conservation easements accomplished by one or more parties. A current expansion of lands which will be in state ownership is the result of the Natural Resource Damage Claim against Alcoa and GM. The settlement includes four parcels in the vicinity of Wilson Hill near the river that will provide important wildlife habitat and protection against future development.

Additional conservation along the St. Lawrence River requires close cooperation with local governments and provides opportunities to work with a number of partners, to include Native American groups, land trusts, New York State, private landowners and others.

The Canadian side of the St. Lawrence River Thousand Islands has been recognized for its international ecological importance by being designated a biosphere reserve. All open space conservation efforts in this area will enhance ecological connectivity across the Frontenac Arch, an area extending from the Adirondacks to Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario.

**STATE PARK BATTLEFIELDS {87.} ♦** – Acquire parcels adjacent to State Park lands at the Oriskany Battlefield in Oneida County and Sackets Harbor Battlefield in Jefferson County to protect from subdivision and development. At Oriskany, there are two parcels with a total acreage of 175 acres.



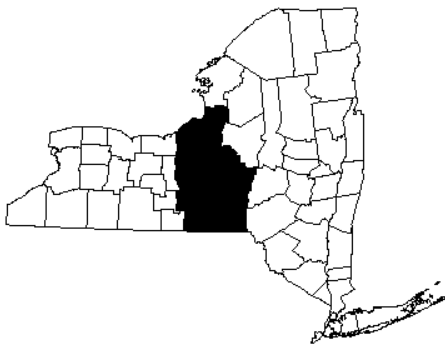
**TOWN OF WESTERN "WILDERNESS CAMP" {88.}** – This 540-acre tract of land provides better access to and consolidation of Buck Hill and Clark Hill State Forests. It will help preserve a significant area of contiguous forest cover in the Adirondack–Tug Hill Connectivity Corridor.

**TWITCHELL LAKE ANNE LABASTILLE ESTATE {89.}** – This property located on the shore of Twitchell Lake is the former home of author/biologist Anne LaBastille, who passed away in 2011. In her will, she requested the property be kept undeveloped and held for conservation purposes. It was subsequently offered to the state to become forest preserve. This 34-acre property provides waterfront on Twitchell Lake and access from the lake to the Pigeon Lake Wilderness Area.

## **REGIONS 6 & 7**

**TUG HILL CORE FORESTS AND HEADWATER STREAMS {90.}** ^– The Tug Hill Plateau is a large, undeveloped forested area that serves as the headwaters for several major water courses. These headwaters make a significant contribution to high-quality drinking water supplies and the Tug Hill Aquifer, as well as wildlife habitat. Major river systems that originate on the Plateau are the Mohawk River, Lansingkill, Deer River, Salmon River, East Branch of Fish Creek, Fish Creek, Sandy Creek, and the Mad River to the north of the Salmon River Reservoir. The integrity of these core forests and headwaters should be protected through a combination of easement and fee acquisition of key parcels. Of particular importance is the maintenance of large private tracts managed for forest products to prevent subdivision and development. These forest tracts support a major regional forest products industry, provide important habitat for wide-ranging and migratory species, and offer a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities.

## **REGION 7/CENTRAL NEW YORK**



Although the topography is gentler than the rough mountainous terrain in the eastern part of the state, New York’s central region contains some of the most beautiful examples of traditional agricultural landscapes, where open land provides exceptionally wide scenic vistas. The moderating effect of Lake Ontario has tempered what would otherwise be a cold climate, and the northern part of the Region is dominated by farmland. There are many large wetlands which are important stopping areas for migratory waterfowl. The remarkable Finger Lakes are a legacy of the Ice Age, when ice-gouged valleys were dammed with glacial debris. Today they are the heart of New York's famous wine industry, as well as being a resort and destination area.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

The Erie Canal corridor supported development of many local industries. Natural salt deposits near Syracuse were mined to supply not only table salt but also raw material for early chemical industries. Agriculture, however, was the mainstay of the area, which was once the national top producer of crops such as hops and apples. Cornell University started as an agricultural school located in the heart of prime farmland country. Elaborate 19th-century buildings in many small towns are testimony to the great wealth once brought by agriculture and offer future Smart Growth opportunities as we seek to revitalize these economies.

To read the Region 7 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

**CAMILLUS VALLEY/NINE MILE CREEK {91.}** – Onondaga County, Towns of Camillus, Marcellus, and Geddes. Expansion of recent acquisitions by DEC and a local land trust help preserve this ecologically sensitive valley that supports a wide diversity of breeding bird and migratory bird species, as well as being the most esteemed and widely used trout stream in Central New York. This project encompasses the Nine Mile Creek Valley, running from Otisco Lake to Onondaga Lake, including enhancing the DEC-administered Camillus Forest, the Nine Mile Creek Critical Environmental Area, the Erie Canal Corridor, and the Water Trail in the Towns of Camillus and Marcellus, which are under immediate development pressure. The project will buffer important attributes from development and provide public waterway access.

**DEVELOP A STATE PARK IN CORTLAND COUNTY {92.}** – Cortland is one of only two counties in New York State outside the Adirondack and Catskill parks that does not host a state park facility. Within Cortland County there are many natural assets. Excellent accessibility from Interstate 81 would enable vacationers, eco-tourists, and recreationists from this area and surrounding regions to access and enjoy the splendor of Cortland County.

**FAIR HAVEN BEACH STATE PARK {93.}** – Fair Haven Beach State Park in Cayuga County is a highly used facility that serves as a key access point on Lake Ontario, with exceptional scenic and wildlife resources. Additional parcels would fully integrate the water access site with the park proper and enhance recreational opportunities.

**GENNY GREEN TRAIL/LINK TRAIL {94.}** – The project would provide for major trail connections between existing trails and state-owned lands in Chenango, Madison, Cortland, and Onondaga counties, including the Finger Lakes Trail, the North Country National Scenic Trail, the Old Erie Canal Trail, the statewide snowmobile corridor trail route and other smaller trails in the area. Using Bowman Lake State Park and state forests and wildlife management lands in the area, more than 150 miles of continuous trails and trail loops could be developed and managed jointly by DEC, OPRHP and local governments.

**NELSON SWAMP {95.}** ♦ – A biologically significant area with special natural beauty and rare flora. This northern white cedar swamp contains ancient trees in excess of 400 years old and approximately 369 species of vascular plants, including the threatened spreading globeflower and the endangered striped

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

coral root. Nelson Swamp is currently the only site in New York State where the coral root has been identified. Further protection of this 1,500-acre swamp will reduce the fragmented ownership pattern, further the management objective of perpetual protection of this unique natural resource and enhance compatible public use opportunities.

**NORTH SHORE OF ONEIDA LAKE {96.} ♦** – The North Shore Oneida Lake Open Space project is located in the Towns of Constantia, West Monroe and Hastings in Oswego County. Its primary goals are to provide additional recreational access sites to Oneida Lake and protect and enhance wetlands in Big Bay Swamp and Toad Harbor Swamp. The wetland acquisitions would be incorporated into the Three Mile Bay Wildlife Management Area. The acquisition area contains high-value wetlands consisting of deep emergent marsh, maple-ash swamp, maple-hardwood swamp, and northern white cedar swamp. It also contains some valuable upland forests. Threatened or special concern species occurring in the area include Henslow's sparrows and northern harriers.

**OLD ERIE CANAL STATE HISTORIC PARK TRAILHEAD DEVELOPMENT, BUFFER AND HISTORIC PROTECTION {97.}** – Includes several properties adjacent to the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park within Central New York, where acquisition will provide opportunities for trailhead development, buffering and/or historic site protection from future encroachment.

**PETER SCOTT SWAMP {98.}** – A large Class I wetland of approximately 1,000 acres adjacent to and hydrologically linked to the Oneida River and the Erie Canal. It consists of several wetland types: cattail marsh, shrub swamp, wooded swamp, wet meadow and open water. Peter Scott Swamp is an important migratory stopover for thousands of waterfowl, contains a great blue heron rookery, and provides valuable spawning habitat for fish. Public ownership will provide increased and perpetual protection and enhance compatible public use of this valuable wetland.

**SALMON RIVER CORRIDOR {99.}** – A scenic and recreational corridor in Oswego County. The Salmon River is a nationally recognized fisheries resource, containing trophy-size trout and salmon. Presently, there are areas of private ownership which interrupt use of the 17 miles of acquired public land and easements along a 20-mile stretch of the Salmon River, from Redfield downstream to Pulaski.

**SOUTHERN SKANEATELES LAKE FOREST AND SHORELINE {100.} ♦^** – The Skaneateles Highlands encompass the scenic terrain extending from Carpenter's Falls to the west to the Staghorn Cliffs to the east. This southern portion of the Skaneateles Lake Watershed is rich in natural resources, including extensive wetlands associated with Bear Swamp Creek, steep wooded hillsides overlooking the lake, and stretches of undeveloped shoreline, including the remarkable Staghorn Cliffs. Within this area, existing public lands include Bear Swamp State Forest, shoreline owned by the City of Syracuse, a park owned by the Town of Scott, the Central New York Land Trust's Ripley Hill Nature Preserve, and several properties owned by the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

These undeveloped lands play an important role in helping to maintain the drinking water supply for the City of Syracuse. Much of the area is also recognized by the National Audubon Society as

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

one of the state's Important Bird Areas. The Staghorn Cliffs are also singled out for recognition due to their unique fossil formations, as well as their scenic beauty.

Recreational resources include Bear Swamp State Forest's extensive multi-use trail system, opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, and boating and paddling on Skaneateles Lake. A proposed expansion of existing recreational trails would add miles of hiking and skiing trails on the east side of the lake.

Select acquisitions as well as the use of conservation easements are needed to ensure the integrity of this landscape while enhancing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

**STATE PARKS GREENBELT/TOMPKINS COUNTY {101.}** – A greenbelt of four state park facilities connected by the Black Diamond Trail Corridor is experiencing impacts from encroaching moderate to high-density development. Acquisition of in-holdings and large parcels adjacent to the parks is necessary to protect these valuable open space recreational resources.

**SUMMERHILL FEN & FOREST COMPLEX {102.}** ♦^ – This project will acquire upland forests, wetlands and adjacent upland buffers along Fall Creek using fee ownership and conservation easements to secure lands recognized for both their biological and recreational significance. Extensive wetlands along Fall Creek provide habitat for a variety of birds and other wildlife, as well as 18 orchid species. Plant diversity is especially high due to the presence of wetland fens, and a number of rare plants are documented here, including the globally rare spreading globeflower. Forests in and around nearby Summerhill State Forest also have been recognized for biological significance through the National Audubon Society's designation of the Greater Summerhill Important Bird Area.

This area encompasses one of the region's larger remaining blocks of contiguous forest. The State Forest's fragmented ownership pattern, however, makes it particularly vulnerable to habitat fragmentation due to conversion of adjacent private lands. In addition to its biological significance, this area also offers significant recreational resources. Public access to Fall Creek's trout waters is already provided through several DEC-maintained sites. Hiking opportunities include trails within Fillmore Glen State Park as well as a one-mile loop within the Finger Lakes Land Trust's McIlroy Sanctuary. The State Forest is a popular destination for hunters and snowmobilers. Conservation of key parcels would ensure continued protection of natural and recreational resources, while creating new opportunities, such as a network of hiking trails that could link Fillmore Glen State Park with McIlroy Bird Sanctuary and Moravia with Lake Como.

## REGIONS 7 & 8

**EMERALD NECKLACE {103.}** ♦^ – The Emerald Necklace is an arc of forested hills and valleys stretching from east to west in the vicinity of Ithaca in Schuyler, Tompkins and Tioga counties. Within this necklace lie more than 50,000 acres of public land, including nine state forests, Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area, Cornell University's Arnot Forest, and Finger Lakes National Forest. These forested lands serve as the headwaters for streams draining into the Finger Lakes as well as the Susquehanna Watershed. Approximately 55,000 acres of the Emerald Necklace are identified in the

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan as important Natural Features Focus Areas for resource, recreation and open space protection. Two Audubon–designated Important Bird Areas (Greater Connecticut Hill and Finger Lakes National Forest) are located within this area, as well as at least 22 sites designated as Unique Natural Areas by Tompkins County's Environmental Management Council. A diversity of wildlife species uses this area, ranging from a full array of nesting neotropical songbirds to an increasing number of black bears. Public lands within the Emerald Necklace have a long history of recreational use, and in recent years, use has increased dramatically. In addition to traditional activities, such as hunting, these lands are seeing growing use for mountain biking (particularly at Shindagin Hollow State Forest), cross–country skiing (particularly at Hammond Hill State Forest) and hiking on the Finger Lakes Trail.

For many years, private lands adjacent to these public holdings have traditionally been managed for compatible uses such as firewood cutting and deer hunting. With increasing residential development in the Ithaca area, however, these lands are increasingly being sought out as home sites. In some cases, such development fragments forested habitat, while limiting recreational uses on adjacent state lands and increasing administrative costs. By consolidating existing state holdings while also ensuring linkages among these sites, there is the potential to create a world–class ecological, recreational and educational resource. A long–term grassroots approach to conserving these lands could achieve this vision, while ensuring the ecological viability of existing state land and also enhancing recreational opportunities. It is recommended that a plan for educational interpretation and enhancement of access to these sites be developed concurrently with any land protection conservation plans for the area.

**FINGER LAKES SHORELINES AND RIPARIAN ZONES {104.} ♦^** – The Finger Lakes Region has been identified as a Major Resource Area and strategies, such as acquisition of additional public access and consolidation of existing State projects continues to be recommended. The shorelines of most of these unique lakes are tied up in private ownership so that most citizens have little direct experience with them, even though their length provides hundreds of miles of shoreline. Steep slopes and riparian zones offer majestic views of these lakes, along with natural protection of their unique resources. Public goals for protection include public access and wildlife protection. Public access for swimming, photography, shoreline fishing, and canoeing is minimal. Natural, forested shoreline is itself a scarce resource, incrementally lost over time to home site development.

The Finger Lakes support a large and diverse population of waterfowl and raptors, which in turn generates significant public interest and educational opportunities. Seneca, Cayuga, Canandaigua and southern Skaneateles Lakes are all designated Important Bird Areas by New York Audubon. They are a significant wintering area for waterfowl (especially pied–billed grebes, redheads, mallards, common goldeneye, canvasback, and the threatened American black duck). Forested areas along and above the lakeshores, especially at southern Skaneateles Lake, provide habitat for raptors and neotropical songbirds, including the threatened cerulean warbler. The shorelines are also important to geese, gulls, shorebirds, pipits, and snow buntings for feeding and even nesting for wetland species. There is a woeful lack of publicly accessible shoreline from which to observe these avian species, with birders

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

often stopping along shoulder-less roads or busy state highways to view portions of the flocks between cottages, creating traffic safety hazards.

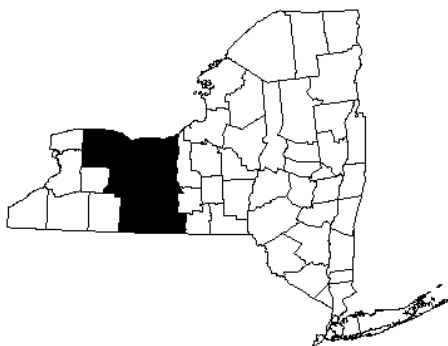
Projects to preserve portions of the shoreline of any of these lakes, either for public access or for wildlife, could include acquisition, easements, or additions to existing public segments. Parties, including New York State, local governments, and non-profit organizations, must be prepared to capitalize on these opportunities, which will become increasingly critical as shoreline development and prices continue to climb. Otisco, Owasco and Conesus lakes offer recreation similar to those activities listed above. While it is not possible to predict future opportunities, several potential lakeshore protection projects can be listed now:

- **Finger Lakes Water Trails** – a network of strategically spaced open shoreline parcels to support low-intensity and passive recreational uses, including: kayaking, boating, bird watching, angling, hunting, and simply seeking solitude by the water.
- **Owasco Flats** – a 2,000-acre project area along Owasco Inlet at the south end of Owasco Lake has several opportunities for acquisitions or cooperative management agreements.
- **Camp Barton** – a Boy Scout camp with extensive frontage on Cayuga Lake (Region 7). NYS Parks is interested in acquiring this property.
- **Cayuga Lake** (Region 7), a tract owned by NYSEG, including 500 acres and 3,000 feet of undeveloped lake frontage in the Town of Lansing has already been identified as a priority.
- **B&H Railroad Property at the South End of Keuka Lake in Hammondsport (Region 8)** – which lies between a pocket park and a protected wetland and next to a small public beach, the only such beach on that lake besides others at the far north end of Keuka Lake.
- **Outlet Trail to Seneca Lake (Region 8)** – extend the eastern terminus of the Outlet Trail to the Seneca Lake shoreline at Dresden.
- **Seneca Lake** – additional analysis is needed to identify other priority sites, especially on this lake, where some of the greatest opportunities for currently undeveloped shoreline may exist.
- **Yawger Creek**– the site is approximately 12 acres and would provide waterfront and fishing access.
- **Otisco Lake Boat Launch Site** – Otisco Lake is the sole lake among the Finger Lakes lacking a public trailered boat launch facility.
- **Leedy's Roseroot** – isolated shoreline cliffs on the west side of Seneca Lake in Yates County.
- **Keuka Bluffs (Keuka Lake)** – in the Town of Jerusalem, Yates County.
- **Hemlock and Canadice Lakes (Hemlock-Canadice State Forest)** – Seven-thousand acres of land surrounding these lakes.
- **Honeoye Lake** – Three-thousand acres of land at the southern end of this lake include parcels adjacent to existing state holdings (Honeoye Inlet WMA and Harriet Hollister Spencer State Park).

**NORTHERN MONTEZUMA WETLANDS {105.}** ♦ ^– This 36,000-acre multiple-ownership land conservation project is New York State's flagship project under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This project, located in Wayne, Seneca and Cayuga counties, lies within its own Major Resource Area—the Montezuma Marshes. Partners involved are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, and many others. The Montezuma Wetland Complex is a registered National Natural Landmark and is New

York's first Audubon Society–designated Important Bird Area. Strategies to conserve this premier wetland complex include fee acquisition by DEC and the USFWS, purchase of conservation easements by government and not-for-profit partners, and execution of Cooperative Management Agreements among partners and landowners. State funding can be matched with federal funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. The complex is now home to the Montezuma Audubon Center. This facility is an educational center funded by the State and managed by the Audubon Society.

### REGION 8/WESTERN FINGER LAKES



The rolling hills of our State's western Finger Lakes, rich agricultural lands, the Montezuma Marsh area, the Erie Canal Corridor and the coastline of Lake Ontario are all part the Southern Tier's varied landscapes. And there is also the Genesee River and its associated canals, which were once an important transportation corridor. Not all of the Genesee was navigable. At Letchworth State Park, known as the “Grand Canyon of the East,” the Genesee has cut a magnificent gorge down through hundreds of feet of rock. At the bottom of the canyon, the river races through rapids and hurtles over many scenic waterfalls.

Rochester and Corning are two of the region's early technology centers, where innovative researchers made companies like Eastman Kodak in Rochester and Corning Glass in Corning world leaders in their fields, and today are becoming the leaders in new technologies, such as those of the Pollution Prevention Institute.

To read the Region 8 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

**CATHARINE VALLEY COMPLEX {106.} ♦^** – This unique Southern Tier complex extends from the southern end of Seneca Lake in Schuyler County, south to the Village of Horseheads in Chemung County. The complex is composed of three major environmental areas with varying habitats and recreational opportunities. Just south of Seneca Lake are towering shale cliffs bordered by Rock Cabin Road. This site harbors a rare plant community and an uncommon plant that is the exclusive food source for three butterflies considered rare in this region. The wild nodding onion, a rare species and listed on the NYS list of protected plants grows in profusion on the cliffside. In addition, more than 120 wildflower species have been identified on this site.

Adjacent to Rock Cabin Road is the Queen Catharine wetland, identified as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. The second environmental area in this complex is the Horseheads Marsh, a Class 1 wetland and the largest freshwater wetland in Chemung County. The marsh is the headwaters for Catharine Creek, a world-class trout stream, and provides the stream with water quality and flood control functions. In addition, the marsh provides habitat for many species of birds (some on the endangered species list), wildlife and reptiles. The third focus in this complex is the

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

abandoned Chemung Canal property, which passes through Horseheads Marsh. Purchase of this property will allow the Catharine Valley Trail connection to the Village of Horseheads by developing a trail along the historic Chemung Canal towpath. This complex offers opportunities to treasure and protect the biodiversity present in the area and to expand recreational and educational opportunities in the valuable open space lands of the Southern Tier.

**CHEMUNG RIVER GREENBELT {107.} ♦** – Located in Chemung and Steuben counties, this project expands and enhances significant recreational resources in a unique, scenic landscape while protecting important wildlife habitat. A Chemung River watershed greenway was first proposed in the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Board’s 1976 Open Space Plan and was further studied in the 2005 Chemung River Comprehensive Master Plan, which covered the Chemung County portion of the watershed. The project would include the Chemung Basin River Trail, a water trail consisting of a series of boat launches in the Chemung River Watershed that connects to the Susquehanna River and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chemung Basin River Trail and related river shore trails are supported by the Friends Chemung Basin River Trail of the Chemung River Watershed, as well as the involved communities. In addition to recreational resources provided by both the river corridors and land-based trails, preservation of open space in the area would link valuable wildlife habitats for timber rattlesnakes, black bear, and bald eagles. Several areas of state land would also be linked, including the Cameron State Forest, the Cameron Mills State Forest, Tracy Creek State Forest, Pinnacle State Park and Erwin Hollow State Forest. Additional protected lands include 1,200 acres held by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and Tanglewood Nature Center.

DEC owns and has permanent easements along the Chemung River for flood control purposes. Increased suburban sprawl in the Elmira–Corning area and scattered residential development on the more rural areas threaten the project area. Specific projects would include but not be limited to: 1. Open space protection of undeveloped floodplain with a focus on high-quality wildlife habitat; 2. Boat launches and fishing access points along the Canisteo and Cohocton as additions to the Chemung Basin River Trail; 3. Protection of the Chemung Palisades, a scenic and wildlife habitat resource, and blocks of contiguous forest on both sides of the river in the Town of Big Flats; 4. Additional hiking and biking trails and camping facilities, connecting existing public facilities, including the Lackawanna Trail in Chemung County; and 5. Protection of wetlands in the Cohocton River watershed, especially the upper portions of the Cohocton River and its tributaries.

Detailed conservation planning that builds upon existing planning and resource management efforts is needed to prioritize specific projects. This nomination capitalizes on the interest and progress to date of multiple organization and governmental entities in protecting this unique and diverse landscape, with an emphasis on protection of important wildlife habitat, recreational access and scenic vista preservation. Acquisitions have the potential to connect, extend and/or add value to 2002 Open Space projects, such as Steege Hill/Chemung Palisades, Mossy Bank, Valley Rim Trail, West Hill Lands (considered threatened under the NYS Natural Heritage Program) and the Town of Erwin’s Green Infrastructure Plan.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

**HIGH-TOR/BRISTOL HILLS/BARE HILL STATE UNIQUE AREA {108.} ♦^** – Located in the Finger Lakes Major Resource Area in Yates and Ontario counties, the High-Tor Wildlife Management Area/Bristol Hills area is marked by extensive and largely unfragmented forests that blanket the steep hills, gullies and eroded cliffs carved by glaciers. The area offers exceptional scenic vistas of the Naples Valley, Canandaigua Lake and Honeoye Lake and provides opportunities to preserve working forest lands. It also has high ecological value. The NYS Natural Heritage Program, working under contract to The Nature Conservancy, has identified Bristol Hills as the largest occurrence of an Appalachian oak-hickory forest in all of New York. More than 13,000 acres of this forest type have been identified in Bristol Hills. Bare Hill is well known in the area as the scenic ridge that rises 865 feet above Canandaigua Lake's eastern shore, just north of Vine Valley. It is largely forested, except for its summit, which is covered with a mix of meadows and shrub lands. Bare Hill is also notable for its expansive views, shallow soils that are susceptible to erosion, and, in most summers, drought stress as well. Surrounding lands are largely forested or shrub fields, and protection of additional open space will help protect sensitive habitats.

The High-Tor Wildlife Management Area and Bare Hill State Unique Area are popular recreational sites attracting visitors from a wide range. Land conservation efforts by the state and not-for-profit organizations, through fee and or easement, will ensure that key tracts of land remain as open space despite increasing development pressures. Pressures from development, unsustainable forest management, and open space land conversion continue to fragment this landscape. Additional land conservation efforts focused on connectivity between High-Tor, Bristol Hills, Bare Hill, and Yates Reforestation Area will provide important migration corridors for species.

**SENECA ARMY DEPOT CONSERVATION AREA {109.} ♦^** – Located in the Towns of Varick and Romulus, Seneca County, this project would provide wildlife habitat benefitting a diversity of species and associated wildlife-dependent recreation. A unique feature of this site is the presence of a white deer herd. This herd developed in part due to the fencing associated with a U.S. Army installation started in the early 1940s and subsequently closed in the 1990s. The fenced perimeter allowed for the protection and management of the white deer herd, which is believed to be the largest, single herd of white, whitetail deer in the world with approximately 200 individuals. The land is traversed by tributaries of four streams, and contains a 60-acre pond and over 1000 acres of wetlands. The area is an IBA and provides habitat for many species of birds including bald eagles and ospreys. This project offers a unique open space opportunity for recreational use as well as significant historical and wildlife values.

**WESTBURY BOG {110.} ♦** – This project, located in a large wetland complex in the Town of Butler, Wayne County, is intended to protect the habitat of an endangered reptile recently documented at this site. Long-term conservation of the site through a variety of tools is proposed, including upgrading the wetland's regulatory classification, negotiating easements, implementing cooperative agreements and undertaking land purchases. Partnering among state and federal agencies, landowners and local colleges to achieve conservation objectives will likely be more successful than individual actions.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

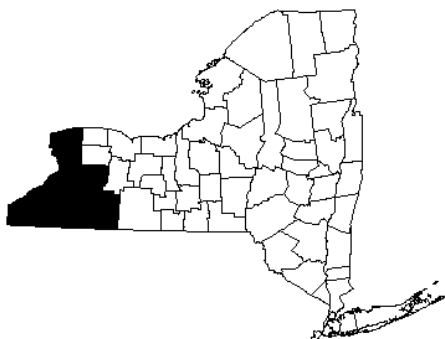
**WOLF GULLY {111.} ♦** – Located in the Town of Naples, Ontario County this site was identified in The Nature Conservancy’s planning sessions for the Western Finger Lakes Landscape Conservation Area. It is a forested landscape situated around an Ice Age glacial melt water channel. Wolf Gull has exceptional biological diversity, most notably in ferns where 31 species have been described over the years, but also woodland salamanders.

## REGIONS 8 & 9

**GENESEE RIVER CORRIDOR {112.} ♦^** – This project will protect the variety of habitats and landscapes found along the Genesee River as it flows from Pennsylvania, entering New York in Allegany County and then north to Lake Ontario. From the Pennsylvania state line, flowing north through the Letchworth State Park gorge, the verdant valley of open grasslands and farm fields along Nations Road in Genesee (both listed by Audubon as New York State Important Bird Areas) to the gorge in the heart of the City of Rochester, nearly the entire length of the Genesee River is in New York. Includes protection of this lineal corridor along 150 miles of river as it flows north, providing links to existing public lands, enhancing public access points, protecting migratory and resident bird habitats supporting farmland protection, and advancing environmental justice projects. This corridor supports several key tributaries and their associated watersheds, including but not limited to the Oatka Creek (Wyoming, Genesee and Monroe counties), Black Creek (Genesee and Monroe counties), Wiscoy Creek and East Koy Creek (Allegany and Wyoming counties). The Region 9 RAC recommends pursuing additional acquisition along the Genesee Valley Greenway and improving partnerships with recreational horseback riders who have indicated a willingness to build and maintain trails.

**TONAWANDA CREEK WATERSHED {113.} ♦** – This project would serve to protect one of the major tributaries of the Niagara River in Genesee, Erie and Niagara counties. The Tonawanda Creek and its four major tributaries—Ellicott Creek, Mud Creek, Murder Creek and Ransom Creek—plus a number of minor tributaries provide an impressive variety of aquatic life as well as an example of aquatic biodiversity that covers a five-county area. The diverse community represented by this watershed includes the threatened longear sunfish, the brindled mad tom, a species of special concern, and more than 20 species of freshwater mussels. The Tonawanda Creek also has its own self-sustaining walleye population. Associated wetlands and open field habitat are common in the basin. Also of importance is the occasional occurrence of forest with old-growth characteristics found scattered among the second-growth forest. The Tonawanda Creek system faces threats from new development, bank erosion, pollution problems and stormwater runoff.

## REGION 9/WESTERN NEW YORK



Everyone has heard of Niagara Falls, but there is much more that New York State's western region offers; shorelines and the escarpment of two Great Lakes, the Southern Tier's Allegheny Plateau, the Allegheny and Genesee rivers, Chautauqua Lake and the multitude of forested state lands. Our farms are successful due to high quality prime agricultural soils and plentiful fresh water. We have a multitude of federal, state and locally protected parks and wildlife areas and a number of emerging greenway projects and trail systems. But a depiction of this region and its many resources is not complete without

mentioning those who reside here. Our citizens represent a colorful blend of those living in urban and rural areas, who appreciate the availability of farm fresh food, places to recreate on their feet, on their bicycles, their snowmobiles, and perhaps even their horses! They ski, hunt, fish, trap, bird (or wildlife observe), love our lakes, our rivers and streams and recreate in our forests, grasslands, wetlands and parks. Our goal is to enhance these open spaces to ensure that all of our citizens have access to these inspiring natural places.

To read the Region 9 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

**BUFFALO RIVER\_WATERSHED {114.} ♦** – This project will serve to protect the Buffalo River corridor as well as its three primary tributaries: Cayuga Creek, Cazenovia Creek and Buffalo Creek. A secondary benefit of this could be improved access for users of the Canoe Trail in the Buffalo River. The remaining undeveloped flood plain forest and meadow areas in the metropolitan Buffalo area are critical for the enjoyment of fish and wildlife for those with low mobility and for the ecological and green infrastructure functions they provide to the region. Without protection from increasing development, these relatively undisturbed areas could further degrade the Buffalo River rather than achieve their use as source areas for the river's restoration. Origins of the tributaries include lands in the Towns of Holland and Sardinia in Erie County, and the Towns of Arcade, Java and Sheldon in Wyoming County. Protection of upstream habitats and establishment of greater connectivity between forested areas should help improve water quality in the system as well as further our state's response to climate change. Significant progress has been made in removing toxic sediment and developing a Habitat Action Plan to delist the lower section of the watershed as an Area of Concern. Continued support of the acquisitions and restorations contained within the Buffalo River Habitat Action Plan for the lower river as well as parcels identified in the Buffalo River Greenway Plan and Buffalo River Ecological Master plan will help to provide public access opportunities and habitat restoration.

**CATTARAUGUS CREEK & TRIBUTARIES {115.} ♦** – This system is the single most important Lake Erie tributary for salmonid fishing within the State. The spring and fall migrations of steelhead (rainbow) trout attract thousands of anglers to the creek each year, and increased public access has become a

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

high priority. The system also provides watershed protection and access to Lake Erie by boaters. The creek and its tributaries include habitat that is currently used by steelhead for spawning and nursery areas. This natural propagation of the primary sport species is helpful in supplementing the overall DEC trout-stocking program to create an extraordinary tributary steelhead fishery. The Connoisarauley Creek and falls is a unique geological area of public access interest. The Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area is situated on portions of both the main branch and South branch of Cattaraugus Creek, and additional protection of this area through land acquisition is desirable. Expansion of the Route 219 Expressway into Cattaraugus County is expected to place additional development pressure on the farmland and forest resources on portions of this watershed.

**CHAUTAUQUA LAKE ACCESS, VISTAS, SHORE LANDS & TRIBUTARIES {116.}** ♦ ^– The majority of the shoreline surrounding Chautauqua Lake has been developed, drastically reducing the vegetative buffer necessary to filter water discharging to the lake and limiting public access to the shoreline for angling and lake/wildlife viewing. In addition, shoreline development has disturbed the littoral zones that are important for sustaining a healthy fish community. Chautauqua Lake supports a regionally important recreational fishery for muskellunge, walleye, black bass and crappie that are accessible to angling only by boat and along the shoreline at Long Point on Lake Chautauqua State Park and Midway State Park. Surrounding sloping hillsides, susceptible to erosion should they be further developed, provide important scenic value to this tourist area. The lake outlet, which contains extensive wetlands, is an ecological oasis. Water-quality issues stemming from activities on the lake's tributaries are a concern and may be addressed by easements or acquisition to protect riparian and upland habitat, such as headwater forests on the lake's tributaries.

**CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY GREENWAY PLAN {117.}** The Chautauqua County Department of Planning & Economic Development, Friends of Chautauqua County Greenways, and other stakeholders are seeking support from the State to implement recommendations provided in the Chautauqua County Greenway Plan (April 2012). These programs/projects are related to the creation and preservation of recreational and conservation corridors, and include projects involving trails for hiking, biking, jogging, horseback riding, and snowmobiling, as well as projects that involve waterways and lakes for canoeing and kayaking. The Greenway Plan also ranks areas based on their important natural and ecological assets, such as forests, wetlands and stream banks, and establishes objectives for establishing trail towns that cater to users of this natural infrastructure.

**ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS {118.}** ♦ – Protect ecological corridors to link existing public lands, protect important fish and wildlife habitats and provide recreational access including land at the approaches to river corridors. Projects include but are not limited to the Niagara River and Genesee River Corridors.

**EXCEPTIONAL FOREST COMMUNITIES {119.}** ♦ – This acquisition project seeks to preserve the region's remaining forest remnants that exhibit old-growth characteristics. Ecologically significant forest tracts include those found at: Allegany State Park, Reinstein Woods, Zoar Valley; The Niagara Gorge slope and

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

talus communities, Hunter Creek Forest (Buffalo Creek Watershed), Sardinia Forest (Buffalo River Watershed) and the Fowlerville and Eighteenmile Creek Gorge forests (Eighteenmile Creek Watershed).

**GRASSLAND PRESERVATION & RESTORATION {120.} ♦** – This project will serve to protect existing grassland habitat and also provide for restoration of native grassland species. Emphasis would be placed on sites where protection of endangered or threatened grassland birds is necessary and where additional nesting habitat could be provided for upland game birds and waterfowl. Sites with sufficient acreage to be effectively managed and sites that are a component of broader management goals would receive primary consideration. Projects include but are not limited to: the Towns of Porter, Wilson, Hartland, Newfane and Somerset in Niagara County; the Towns of Covington and Middlebury in Wyoming Co.; and the Mill Road Scenic Overlook in Erie County.

**INLAND LAKES {121.} ♦** – Protection of undeveloped shoreline, associated wetlands and critical tributary habitat. Provide protection of water quality and important fish and wildlife habitat. Secure adequate public access for recreational use through acquisition or easement. Projects include but are not limited to:

- Bear Lake (Chautauqua County) – shoreline protection and public access
- Cassadaga lakes (Chautauqua County) – shoreline protection
- Cuba Lake (Allegany County) – shoreline protection
- Chautauqua Lake (Chautauqua County) – shoreline protection
- Findley Lake (Chautauqua County) – shoreline protection and public access
- Silver Lake (Wyoming County) – shoreline protection

**LAKE ERIE TRIBUTARY GORGES {122.} ♦** – This project seeks to acquire public access to these unique ecological and geological areas. Chautauqua Gorge is the primary public water source for the Village of Westfield. Several hundred acres of this watershed are currently owned by the village. Gages Gulf and Twenty Mile Gorge are located in the Town of Ripley. Twenty Mile Creek is an important trout stream, provides unusual steep gorge terrain and ecological habitat, and has scenic, recreational and educational value. Canadaway Creek, which includes Shumla Falls and Arkwright Falls, lies in the Town of Arkwright in northern Chautauqua County. Access to these attractions is primarily limited to crossing private lands and some very steep slopes. Acquisition of this 4+-mile trailway/greenway project along Canadaway Creek would not only provide needed access and protection of natural communities, but would also serve to enhance and connect the existing Tarbox and Evanke trails with the east side Overland Trail and the Canadaway Creek Wildlife Management Area. Other areas of interest include 18 Mile Creek Gorge and Cazenovia Creek Gorge in the Towns of West Seneca and Elma, Erie County.

**NIAGARA ESCARPMENT {123.} ♦** – The Niagara Escarpment is a large geologic feature formed at the edge of an ancient sea that spans over 750 miles, passing through Wisconsin, Ontario and New York State. The Niagara Escarpment contains some of the best exposures of 500 million-year-old fossils found anywhere in the world, threatened, rare and endangered plants and unique ecological

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

communities. In Canada, the Niagara Escarpment is designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve because of its unique geologic and ecological features.

When glaciers receded at the end of the last Ice Age, fast-flowing water carved a path through the escarpment, forming the Niagara Gorge and Niagara Falls. The Niagara Escarpment contributes to the microclimates and soil conditions that make possible Niagara County's large and successful wineries and fruit orchards. Historically, small boats on the Erie Canal carried cargo up and over the escarpment at the locks in Lockport, and the escarpment played an important role in the history of Native Americans and the Underground Railroad.

**NIAGARA RIVER WATERSHED {124.}** – Several priority areas were identified for the Niagara River Watershed, specifically:

Protect and expand core forest areas resilient to climate change – These lands include those 500 acre or greater tracts of undisturbed forest located within the five, upland sub-basins of the Niagara River Watershed (Eighteenmile Creek, Buffalo River, Buffalo Creek, Cayuga Creek and Upper Tonawanda Creek). Faced with uncertain climate change scenarios, these lands have the greatest potential to withstand additional climate pressures and enhance community resiliency.

Acquire and protect critical headwater forest areas – In the Niagara River Watershed, forest tracts containing 1st or 2nd order streams, containing material contribution zones and consisting of large tracts of intact riparian forest are considered critical headwater protection areas. These lands support the habitats of native or naturalized spawning trout populations in the cold water fisheries of the upper watershed and northern pike spawning within the warm water fisheries along the coastal areas. Additionally, critical headwater forest lands hold the greatest potential to protect drinking water at its source as well as influence the overall condition of downstream tributary channel conditions.

Target and restore the fullest biodiversity and functionality values possible in quarry habitat reclamation projects – Within the Niagara River Watershed, the lands surrounding the Onondaga Escarpment often intersect with the Onondaga Aquifer. Of the 20 active or reclaimed sand and gravel pits in the Town of Clarence, Newstead and Alden, 16 list habitat as the primary reclamation objective. These lands have value as potential future open space and unique wetland habitat restoration or acquisition projects.

**TRAILS & TRAILWAYS {125.}** ♦ – Protect existing lineal corridors and provide for acquisition or easement of existing trails and trailways for additional undeveloped linkage to connect existing trails. Examples would be unused or abandoned railroad corridors and existing trails that do not meet the criteria of long-distance corridors. Examples include the WAG Trail in Allegany County, the Senator Pat McGee Trail in Cattaraugus County, the Chautauqua Rail to Trail in Chautauqua County, and the Chautauqua County Greenway. These trails should promote compatible, multiple uses to meet public demand for recreational trail use.

Projects include but are not limited to:

- Multi-Use Trails
- Equestrian Trails
- Erie Catt Rail Trail

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- Niagara River Greenway
- Triple Divide and WAG
- Genesee Valley Greenway State Park
- WNY Greenway
- Chautauqua County Greenway System

**SIGNIFICANT WETLANDS {126.}** – Protection of significant natural wetland communities, which provide ecological diversity for flora and fauna and protection of water quality. Important for the recreational, educational and ecological enhancement opportunities provided. Examples include Keaney Swamp, Bird Swamp and Hartland Swamp.

**URBAN WETLANDS {127.}** – Urban wetlands, because of their size, habitat type and quality, provide resident and migration habitat for wildlife, which would otherwise be absent from urban landscapes. Valuable wildlife viewing and outdoor teaching opportunities are obtained from these natural communities. Two examples are the Klydel and Tiffet wetlands, which provide habitat for forest birds, such as Cooper’s hawk, and marsh birds, such as least bittern, within urban settings. Protection of wildlife habitat associated with urban wetlands often requires wetland acquisition and establishment of a protected upland buffer zone through acquisition or easement of adjacent properties. Other examples exist in Tonawanda, North Tonawanda, Amherst, Cheektowaga, Lackawanna and the Cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

- **Niagara River Island Preservation** – Create an island management plan and no wake zone for the Strawberry-Motor Island shallow water complex in the Niagara River, currently home to Muskellunge, a heron rookery and a nesting pair of bald eagles; all are vulnerable to disturbances from power boats and personal watercraft.
- **Grand Island Habitat** – Large wooded wetland tracts on the southwest portion of Grand Island should be protected through land acquisition and easements. Grand Island contains a significant amount of coastal wetlands in the Niagara River Greenway, and provides habitat for many protected fish and mussel species. Water quality and coastal habitat in this area is generally good and should be maintained in its current condition.
- **Cayuga Creek Riparian Habitat (City and Town of Niagara Falls)** – This area offers ability to increase connectivity and improve habitat between the Cayuga and Bergholtz Creek corridors. Poor water quality and riparian habitats have been documented in this region and are attributed to pollution from a nearby CSO and non-point sources. A 12-15-acre forested patch exists along the border just north of Niagara Falls that is a potential opportunity for protection and restoration of riparian wetlands that will reduce pollutant loads, improve stream cover, and offer enhanced connectivity to surrounding natural areas. Several funding sources in this region can be used to support project completion.
- **Town of Tonawanda Riverfront** – Restoration of degraded habitat in this area presents an opportunity for creation of habitat for rare species, water quality improvement, and waterfront access. Particularly, restoration of grassland habitats on the parcel that was once the Cherry Farm landfill and those that are adjacent to the south should occur to accommodate successional

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

grassland habitat for declining avian species. As part of the largest coastal marsh in the upper Niagara historically, wetland restoration is also important in this area. It is currently in transition from heavy industry and can be used as a model for other areas in the region experiencing a similar transition.

- **Niagara River Greenway** – The Greenway, designated as an interconnected system of green space connecting Lake Erie to Lake Ontario along the Niagara River and along its major tributaries, should be a priority for land acquisition. Many parcels are available for purchase; however, the funding sources and mechanisms in place to procure and conserve them are insufficient. Strengthen urban wetlands along the Niagara River by purchasing lands and establishing conservation easements along the Niagara River Greenway.
- **Buried Creek and Stream Systems** – In an effort to restore natural waterway systems to the greatest extent possible, emphasis should be placed upon land acquisitions along disturbed waterways, with an immediate priority on the Scajaquada and Cornelius Creek systems. These efforts would facilitate re-naturalization, including daylighting of buried sections, de-channelization, implementation of effective floodplain and buffer systems and habitat connectivity.

## MULTI-REGION

### Regions 3, 4 and 7

**DELAWARE RIVER BRANCHES AND MAIN-STEM CORRIDORS {128.}** ♦ ^– The region encompassing the Delaware River Corridor is identified in the Open Space Plan as a major greenway and recreationway in Regions 3, 4 and 7, and the entire Delaware River corridor from Hancock (Delaware County) to Cherry Island (Orange County) is designated as a National Scenic and Recreational River. The East and West Branches of the Delaware River, as well as the Main Stem of the Delaware River, are exceptional cold water fisheries, with the Main Stem Delaware also being critical as a waterway open to fish migrating to and from the ocean. These rivers also offer numerous recreational opportunities, such as fishing, canoeing, rafting, and eagle watching, which bring in many visitors and boost the regional economy. The rivers and their watersheds are also critical biological resources, from both aquatic and terrestrial standpoints, with many rare, unique, threatened, and endangered species living in this area, including the bald eagle, timber rattlesnake, American shad, and several plant species. The East and West Branches of the Delaware River are part of the New York City Water Supply System, which is the nation's largest unfiltered municipal water supply, and protection of these watersheds is critical for the continuation of a clean drinking water supply for millions of people. Currently, only a tiny percentage of land along the Delaware River Branches and Main Stem corridors is permanently protected, especially the area outside and downstream of the New York City Watershed.

### Regions 4, 6 and 7

**CENTRAL LEATHERSTOCKING – MOHAWK GRASSLANDS AREA {129.}** ♦ – Includes significant grassland habitat extending from western Montgomery, northwestern Schoharie, and northeastern Otsego counties in Region 4 west thru Herkimer, Oneida, Madison and southeastern Onondaga counties in Regions 6 and 7. This area, which is referred to as “Grassland Breeding Bird Focus Area #4” in “A Plan



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

for Conserving Grassland Birds in New York” is regarded by Audubon as the most significant of such habitat in any portion of Region 4. According to the above grassland bird conservation plan, focus area #4 supports several of the state's bird species of greatest conservation need; is a particularly important nesting area for NYS–threatened upland sandpipers and northern harriers; and provides wintering habitat for the NYS–endangered short–eared owl. Additionally, only one of four possible breeding records for the NYS endangered loggerhead shrike in the 2000–2005 *NYS Breeding Bird Atlas* was reported from this area. Protection of large grasslands in this area by fee or easement acquisition is desirable under this project or under the multi–regional State Forest, Unique Area and Wildlife Management Area Protection Priority Project.

### Regions 4, 7 and 8

**UPPER SUSQUEHANNA DRAINAGE WATER TRAIL AND OTHER WATERFRONT PROJECTS {130.} ♦^** – This major river valley corridor, which encompasses portions of Otsego, Delaware, Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Tioga, and Chemung counties, is a substantial component of the federal priority Chesapeake Bay drainage basin, the largest river basin on the Atlantic Seaboard. The Susquehanna River contributes the largest proportion of fresh water flowing into Chesapeake Bay, and the quality of this water, which supports a significant warm water fishery, is influenced by open space protection within the corridor. Protection of parcels along the Susquehanna, including critical overlook sites and floodplains, could provide needed public access to the river and its tributaries, thereby enhancing recreational opportunities while providing economic benefits to local communities and reducing the potential for flood damage. Specific sites of recreational importance include Brookwood Point, located on Otsego Lake, the Susquehanna’s headwaters, and a key access point for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, as well as the Oaks Creek Blueway, beginning at Deowongo Island in Canadarago Lake and extending to Compton Bridge, just south of Otsego Lake. The majority (from 60 to almost 80 percent) of lands surrounding the Susquehanna’s main tributaries are actively farmed, with a substantial proportion of the acreage containing prime agricultural soils. Also within this area is Franklin Mountain, which encompasses a ridgeline separating the Susquehanna and Delaware River watersheds in northern Delaware County. Franklin Mountain provides outstanding opportunities for viewing seasonal raptor migrations, as evidenced by the area’s inclusion in National Audubon’s list of Important Bird Areas in New York State.

### Regions 6, 7, 8 and 9

**LAKE ONTARIO AND LAKE ERIE SHORELINES, ISLANDS AND NIAGARA RIVER {131.} ♦^** – A major New York State resource consisting of islands, sand dunes, bluffs, embayments, wetlands, major tributaries, lake plains, significant bat and avian migratory flyways, opportunities for shoreline and island access and other significant natural and cultural resources. This system begins at the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson County and extends to the New York/Pennsylvania border on Lake Erie. The near shore areas, drowned river mouths, and riparian corridors provide spawning and nursery habitat for various fish species, including those that are threatened and endangered, such as lake sturgeon. This area also provides nesting, feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl.

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

The lake plain and escarpment, especially where they are located relatively close to the lake, define important avian and bat migratory flyways, providing crucial resting and feeding areas during migratory periods, and critical airspace for migrating birds and bats. They also provide important and unique nesting and wintering habitats for critical avian species, including the American bald eagle, short-eared owl, northern harrier and other species of conservation concern. The Lake Erie and Niagara escarpments are noted geographical features that provide a diversity of ecologically significant habitats along their shores, as well as important historic, cultural and scenic assets. Recreation in the waterways continues to be a primary concern as urban areas demonstrate increasing demand for swimming, boating and fishing opportunities.

Protection of the islands in the Niagara River Important Bird Area, such as Strawberry, Motor, and Sunken (Grass) islands, in conjunction with the development of long-term management plans, will ensure that the viability of these habitats will be maintained for resident breeding birds like the bald eagle, great blue heron and white egret; spawning fish like the muskellunge; native mussel species; and many migratory birds. The Niagara River corridor with its tributaries is identified as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and is featured in the “Niagara River Greenway” project. The western end of the Lake Erie lake plain has been designated as part of the Lake Erie Concord Belt Heritage Area. This system also supports numerous key embayments, such as Wilson, Mud, Guffin, Sawmill, Ray, Sawyer, Three Mile, Chaumont, Black River and Henderson in Region 6; North Sandy Pond, South Sandy Pond, Mexico Bay and Little Sodus Bay in Region 7; Port Bay, Sodus Bay, Irondequoit Bay and Braddock Bay (with its associated ponds) in Region 8; and Lotus Bay, Hanford Bay and Eagle Bay in Region 9. Point Peninsula in Region 6 provides important winter concentration area for arctic breeding hawks and owls. Over 100 Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife habitats have been designated within this system.

Major tributaries include Sandy Creek and Black River in Region 6; Oswego and Salmon rivers in region 7; Oak Orchard and Sandy creeks in Region 8; and Tonawanda and Cattaraugus creeks in Region 9. This area also features the Sackets Harbor Battlefield Historic Site and Sandy Pond, the largest freshwater dune system in the northeastern United States. Galloo Island, the largest undeveloped island on Lake Ontario, measuring approximately 3½ miles by 1½ miles or 1,934 acres, is just one of the undeveloped islands worthy of attention. Leto Island in the Oswego River represents an urban access opportunity to a major trout and salmon Lake Ontario tributary fishery with significant local economic impact. The Braddock Bay Complex and Niagara Falls as well as smaller but important areas are also at risk of development.

### Region 7, 8 & 9

**Onondaga Escarpment {132.} ♦** – A group of hard limestones and dolostones of Devonian age, this formation extends from the Hudson River, passing south of Syracuse and Rochester through Niagara County, to southern Ontario. The escarpment is prominent with unique natural features that should be protected. While it is not possible to predict future opportunities, several potential protection projects can be listed now:

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Green Lakes State Park** – Acquisition of surrounding open space will not only protect existing park resources and provide recreational opportunities, but also provide linkages to the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park.
- **Clark Reservation State Park** – contains a meromictic lake and rare species of flora and fauna. Conservation measures are needed in areas outside and upstream from the park to protect these critical resources.
- **Buttermilk Falls** – a 60-foot waterfall in Oatka Creek. It is the point where the creek drops over the Akron-Bertie Onondaga Dolomite and Limestone Formation in the Town of LeRoy, Genesee County. During periods of low rainfall, the creek “disappears” into the bedrock upstream of the falls and reappears either at the base of the falls or at points on the rock face.
- **Fossil Coral Reef** – a 100+-acre property located in the Town of LeRoy, Genesee County and has been on the U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service’s Registry of National Natural Landmarks since 1967. It is abundant with ancient fossils, wildlife and trails.
- **Morganville Gorge** – a unique scenic area located in the Town of Stafford and contains a small five-foot waterfall followed by a larger 30-foot waterfall, as well as a cave where Black Creek goes over the Onondaga Escarpment. It is named after William Morgan, who exposed the secrets of the Masons and subsequently disappeared and was presumed murdered in 1826.
- **Indian Falls** – located in the Town of Pembroke, is a unique scenic area with a 20-foot waterfall in Tonawanda Creek. Ely Parker was born in 1828 in a cabin overlooking the falls. He was an aid to General U.S. Grant during the Civil War and wrote the final draft of the Confederate Terms of Surrender at the Appomattox Court House.
- **Divers Lake** – located in the Town of Alabama, is a small glacial lake with a 70 to 80-foot-high flint ledge surrounded by wooded land. The lake is fed by springs from the Onondaga Escarpment. The flint mine in the ledge was used by Native Americans for making arrowheads and other tools and is the only major flint quarry in western New York.

## STATEWIDE

**STATE FORESTS, UNIQUE AREAS & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS PROTECTION {133.}** – State Forests, Unique Areas, and Wildlife Management Areas provide valuable natural, cultural and recreation resources enjoyed by millions of visitors each year. Protection and enhancement of these resources is critical to their long-term stewardship. It is important to improve access, eliminate in-holdings and provide buffers to protect them and to enhance recreational and cultural opportunities.

**RIPARIAN BUFFERS, COASTLINE AND WETLAND PROTECTION PROJECTS AIMED AT REDUCING THE IMPACTS OF STORMS, STORM SURGES AND FLOODING ON HUMAN AND NATURAL COMMUNITIES {134.}** – Scientists have documented changes in the climate of the northeastern United States that correlate to changes in temperatures around the globe. With increased temperatures, we can expect more heavy rains and stronger storms and more hurricanes and tropical storms, which will result in increased local flooding, expand floodplain areas, move barrier islands and dunes, move wetlands due to sea-level rise and increase the number of high-velocity flows and storm surges. Unchecked development in

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

frequently inundated areas has and will continue to increase the cost of replacement or relocation and the loss of natural floodplain, coastal marshes, dunes and barrier islands.

Open Space conservation programs and strategies that focus on protecting wetlands, floodplain forests and coastlines should be our first line of defense to protect adjacent private property and communities from increased storm intensity, flooding and rising sea level. These natural resource-based programs are usually far cheaper than “engineered” solutions that often shift negative impacts downstream or to adjacent property owners, as well as not being sustainable for the long term or protecting natural resources. As an added benefit, these programs can promote the resilience of natural communities to climate change (for example, by enhancing aquatic connectivity, protecting cover along streams and lakes that serve as refuge for trout and other cold water fish species).

Spatial modeling can inform where strategic investments in the protection of riparian and wetland areas through fee and easement acquisitions can promote more climate-resilient human and natural communities and should be used to prioritize protection projects.

**NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM {135.}** – An important recreation corridor and primary trail system from Waterford west to Buffalo (with branches from Waterford north to Whitehall and from Syracuse north to Oswego) that provides hiking, bicycling, water access and other recreational opportunities. This canal links the major upstate cities of Albany, Schenectady, Utica, Rome, Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo. Extensive funding has been committed in the last few years to completion of the Canal Trail within the Canal Recreationway. Also, federal legislation has been passed that recognizes the national significance of the waterway and adjacent lands.

The Erie Canal Greenway is one part of a long-term effort to create an interconnecting greenway system across New York State. The complete Greenway system will ultimately comprise three distinct parts—the Erie Canal Greenway, the Niagara Greenway and the Hudson Valley Greenway. Each of the greenways will continue to operate separately and will collectively represent one of the largest greenway systems in the nation. A greenway designation incorporates a more regional approach to land-use planning, tourism, recreational trail development and other collaborative initiatives. The fundamental concept behind a greenway is to partner with communities and assist them in local grassroots planning that balances their economic and environmental resources. Establishment of the Erie Canal Greenway will strengthen local ties across the Canal Corridor and protect and enhance its natural and cultural resources for future generations.

In December 2000, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Act (PL 106– 544, title VIII) was adopted by the U.S. Congress. This designation applies to all 234 municipalities adjoining the 524 miles of navigable waterway that comprise the New York State Canal System, including the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga–Seneca and Oswego; the historic alignments of these canals, including the cities of Albany and Buffalo; and related navigable lakes, including Seneca and Cayuga lakes. The legislation acknowledges the instrumental role the canals played in the growth and development of the United States and affirms a national interest in the preservation and interpretation of the corridor’s important historic, cultural, recreational, educational, scenic and natural resources. The National Heritage Corridor will serve as an “umbrella” for uniting and coordinating existing federal, state, and local plans and multiple points of view, focusing on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and build on

mutual interests.

**WORKING FOREST LANDS {136.}** – Recent trends in the forest products industry suggest there is an increasing demand for wood products from northeast timber, but for some companies, the current economics of long-term forest land ownership are difficult. Private forest ownership is essential to the future of rural New York State for sustaining strong natural resource-based industries and for continuing the recreational and ecological values produced by working forests. The sale of easements to the State of such lands may improve the long-term economic and ecological sustainability of working forest lands.

The Working Forest Lands category relies upon the use of conservation easements (through acquisition, donation, or land exchanges) held by the state and local governments and qualified not-for-profit organizations. These easements combine three specific aspects: 1) acquisition of development rights, whereby any commercial or residential development of those lands is prevented, with the exception of development associated with continued timber production; 2) public recreational rights, e.g., hiking, wildlife observation, fishing, camping, hunting and trapping; and 3) sustainable forest management practices to secure the long-term protection of productive forest lands. State acquisition of conservation easements over working forest lands authorized under this category must meet all of the following conditions:

- Acquisition projects funded through the Environmental Protection Fund must comply, when required, with the local government notification and review provisions set forth in Articles 54 and 56 of the Environmental Conservation Law.
- Lands must be of a size and character suitable for long-term forest management use.
- The purchase must be from a willing seller.
- Acquisition of fee title to the land or directly adjacent parcels under the same ownership requires separate approval through the Open Space Plan process.

**STATE PARK & STATE HISTORIC SITE PROTECTION {137.}** – State Parks and Historic Sites provide valuable natural, cultural and recreational resources enjoyed by millions of visitors each year. Protection and enhancement of existing parks and historic sites is critical to long-term stewardship of these resources. It is important to improve access, protect viewsheds, eliminate in-holdings and provide buffers to protect resources, as well as to enhance recreational and cultural opportunities.

**STATEWIDE FARMLAND PROTECTION {138.}** – Farmland protection is a critical component of the State's overall efforts to conserve open space. This land provides fresh produce, scenic open space, vital wildlife habitat, and the economic backbone to many communities. Governor Cuomo's yogurt and beer initiatives have brought additional attention to the importance of agriculture and the land that supports it. The plan has long recognized the importance of agriculture and how it contributes to the protection of open space in New York State. Every community, from large metropolitan New York City to small towns, has a foodshed that provides important sources of local food (see Hudson Valley/New York City Foodshed priority project discussion).

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

A 1997 report by the American Farmland Trust ranked the Hudson Valley as part of the tenth, and western New York the eleventh most threatened agricultural region in the country, where prime agricultural soils and suburban development pressures are on a collision course. Many municipalities and land trusts have generated local funding for farmland protection which could be augmented with State funding. Regional Advisory Committees have noted that preservation of farmland, in the face of development pressures, is critical to the future of the State. Reasonably viable farmland under consideration should be protected, whenever possible, by the purchase of an easement rather than fee simple acquisition to enhance future use of the land for agriculture.

- **Urban Community Gardens** – defined by Agriculture & Markets Law Article 2–C, community gardens and urban farming provide a variety of benefits to the state’s urban population. Community gardens and urban farms provide needed green space in areas where public parks are scarce; grow nutritious fresh foods for neighborhood families, emergency food sites, schools, farmers’ markets, local restaurants and community-supported agriculture programs; educate community members about the natural world, local foods, nutrition and environmental stewardship; provide safe spaces for exercise in communities with poor access to physical activity outlets; deliver environmental benefits such as reduced city heat, decreased stormwater runoff, safer soil, composting sites and natural habitats; and bring community members together, filling an important social function in neighborhoods where gathering spaces are limited. Land trusts are building a greater presence as a mechanism for protecting community gardens and urban farms. This project in part aims to provide permanent access to land for use as community gardens and urban farms.

**LONG-DISTANCE TRAIL CORRIDORS, NETWORKS AND LINKAGES {139.}** – Land and water trail corridors, networks and linkages provide important connections among communities, recreation areas, existing open space, and natural and cultural resources. They offer recreational opportunities for millions of hikers, bikers, joggers, equestrians, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, nature enthusiasts, kayakers, and motorized and non-motorized users. Trail connections provide an important way for local communities to benefit from neighboring state lands. Wider trail corridors also provide significant travel corridors for wildlife. The function of a trail can range from serving a local community to being part of a statewide or national long-distance trail system. Various methods such as fee acquisition, easements and landowner permits are used in developing a trail and/or securing the continued continuity of a trail. Unused or abandoned railroads, in particular, provide good opportunities for the development of trails and linkages. The Federal Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) recognizes the need to protect and preserve these abandoned corridors while technologies are created and needs determined, providing for interim upgrades of the corridor for the creation of multi-use trails. The intent of this project is not to achieve broader acquisition but to work to integrate these corridors and trails into community and state land connections that contribute further to the region’s recreation and tourism economy.

The State has an obligation to adequately maintain and police such trails and to protect adjacent private landowners from illegal trespass, poaching and other nuisances resulting from the inappropriate use of such trails. Access to these trails should also be purchased to ensure public ability

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

to use the trails. This priority project pertains to both existing and proposed trail corridors and networks included in the Statewide Trails Plan as well as those that may not be in that plan.

These are generally one-time opportunities that must be carefully evaluated and acted upon. Changing private ownership patterns and increased development continues to threaten the integrity of many trail systems and the opportunities to create new connections. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Long Path Trail, Highlands Trail, Finger Lakes Trail, Erie Canalway, Greenway Trail Systems, Rail-Trails, and Long Island Greenbelt Trail System and North Country National Scenic Trail are just a few of the many trail systems for which it is important to provide permanent public access and safe travel routes. In addition to recreational opportunities, a well-protected, managed and maintained recreational trail system has the potential to drive economic development. This project is intended to provide permanent public access and safe travel routes for long-distance trails, such as:

- **Appalachian National Scenic Trail:** A continuous 2,100-mile trail from Mount Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail is the nation's first National Scenic Trail. In New York, it runs from the Wallkill River in Orange County across the Hudson Valley, leaving the state near Dover Plains in Dutchess County. In areas of eastern Dutchess County in the Towns of Dover and Pawling, proposed developments have the potential to significantly impact the rural and agricultural character and viewshed of the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail corridor also has the potential to protect significant habitat areas along its length in New York State. Both the Towns of Warwick and jointly, Pawling and Dover have been approved by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to be "Appalachian Trail Communities." That approval was due in part to their commitment to protect the Appalachian Trail from adverse development.
- **Long Path Trail:** The Long Path is a hiking corridor with the vision of linking New York City with the Adirondack high peaks. Currently the Long Path extends from the George Washington Bridge along the Palisades Ridge, into Harriman State Park and Schunnemunk Mountain. From there, it runs northwest across central Orange County to the Shawangunk Ridge, through Minnewaska State Park Preserve, the Catskill Park and north into John Boyd Thacher State Park in Albany County, some 330 miles. Ultimately, it is proposed to connect to Whiteface Mountain. The path would link major landmarks, including Revolutionary War sites and significant geological features. State acquisitions would protect the trail corridor, provide watershed protection, including the New York City watershed, enhance access to state forests and other public lands, and allow sections of the trail to be rerouted off public roads, thereby enhancing public enjoyment and safety. Additional trail corridors could be acquired as properties exchange owners. The significant progress made in northern Greene County should be continued, and further work is necessary in Schoharie County, including key threatened parcels in the Town of Middleburgh. The Long Path is the main north/south trail corridor in New York State, and protection by public ownership will ensure continued recreational opportunities and watershed protection for generations to come. Along its length, the Long Path also provides linkages to a number of other trail systems, including several long-distance trails. Those connections include the Appalachian Trail, the Highlands Trail, Hudson Valley Greenway trails, the Shawangunk Ridge Trail, trail networks in State Forests and Parks,

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

including Minnewaska and the Catskill Park, and the Finger Lakes Trail. Saratoga County's Green Infrastructure Plan supports extending the path along public roadways and lands including Lake Desolation.

- **Highlands Trail:** The Highlands Trail stretches for more than 200 miles from Philipsburg, NJ on the Delaware River northeast into Sterling Forest on the NY border, then north to Goosepond Mountain State Park, Schunnemunk Mountain, Black Rock Forest and Storm King Mountain. Work is currently under way to extend the trail and runs east across the Hudson River through the Hudson Highlands and Clarence Fahnestock State Parks in Putnam County to the Connecticut border, with the first new section in Wonder Lake State Park. The Highlands Trail is in the process of extending west through Pennsylvania and eastward through Connecticut, making it a multi-state long-distance trail encompassing the entire Highlands Physiographic Region.
- **Finger Lakes Trail:** A primitive foot trail which connects the Allegheny Mountains with the Catskills by passing through remote areas of the Southern Tier of New York State. While public land agencies have worked to accommodate the trail on state park lands, reforestation areas, forest preserve lands and other public lands along its 562-mile route across NY, the majority of the trail traverses private lands. The Finger Lakes Trail provides connections among a number of other long-distance trails, including the North Country National Scenic Trail and the Long Path and through connection with the Long Path, connections with the Appalachian Trail and the Shawangunk Ridge Trail are also made. Increased public ownership and easements will protect this valuable and unique hiking experience.
- **Rail Trails:** Rail trails are multi-purpose public paths created from former railroad corridors. Most often flat or following a gentle grade, they traverse urban, suburban and rural parts of New York State. Ideal for many uses, such as bicycling, walking, in-line skating, cross-country skiing, equestrian and wheelchair use, rail trails are extremely popular as recreation and transportation corridors. They create healthier places for healthier people. They serve as wildlife conservation and historical preservation corridors, stimulate local economies by increasing tourism and promoting local business, offer safe and accessible routes for work and school commuting, and promote active lifestyles for all ages. Current and planned rail trails in New York provide the opportunity to create recreational linkages among communities and resources. Projects such as Ulster County's proposed Catskill Mountain Rail Trail and Unified Rail Trail Network will connect Forest Preserve lands and communities in the Catskills directly to the City of Kingston, as well as to other Hudson Valley Greenway trails and communities in Ulster County and Dutchess County, through connections like the Walkway Over the Hudson. Existing rail trails throughout the state already provide multiple connections. Strengthening protection of these existing corridors and protecting new corridors will promote community connections, safe and accessible routes and promote an active lifestyle for people of all abilities.
- **Hudson Valley Greenway Trail System:** Including multi-use trails, rail trails, bicycling trails, water trails and the Hudson River School Art Trail. This system of trails links cultural and historic sites, parks, open spaces and community centers; provides access to the Hudson River; provides access to public open space areas; and features the painting sites of the Hudson River School Artists.



## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

- **Water Trail/Blueways:** Water Trails, sometimes known as Blueways, are both a very old and a very new concept in long-distance recreational trails. DEC has been managing New York's first water trail, the Adirondack Canoe Route, since the late 1800s. Modern water trails are a more recently recognized trail type, first gaining national prominence in the early 1990s. A modern water trail is defined as a recreational waterway on a river, lake, or ocean between specific points, containing access points and day-use and camping sites for the boating public. Currently New York has nearly 1,800 miles of interconnected, operational water trails, and is home to two of the first nine National Water Trails designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail and the Bronx River Water Trail. New York shares one international and two interstate water trails. Crossing into Quebec, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail runs from the Adirondacks to the Atlantic Ocean in Maine, and the Lake Champlain Paddlers' Trail from Whitehall to the Canadian border. Other water trails in New York include the NYS Canal System consisting of the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals, the New York City Water Trail, the Delaware River Water Trail, the Chenango River Water Trail, and the Black Creek Water Trail. Water trails are under development on the Susquehanna River, which begins in Cooperstown and ends in Chesapeake Bay; on a number of Finger Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Lake George, and along coastal Long Island.
- **Erie Canal Greenway** – See discussion in *NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM*.
- **Genesee Greenway/Recreationway** – The Genesee Valley Greenway (GVG) is a 90-mile-long corridor that extends from the City of Rochester in Monroe County through to the Village of Hinsdale in Cattaraugus County. It passes through woodlands, wetlands, river and stream valleys and rolling farmlands, providing connections to Letchworth State Park, local parks, major trail systems and historic villages and towns in Monroe, Livingston, Wyoming, Allegany and Cattaraugus counties. The cinder path of the former rail bed provides a trail for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature observation, horseback riding, and snowmobiling. Important progress has been accomplished in establishing a network of trails that will improve the quality of life in western New York State.
- **Genny-Green Trail/Link Trail** – A multiple-use, long-distance trail system that would provide for major trail connections among existing trails and state-owned lands in Chenango, Madison, Cortland, and Onondaga counties, including the Finger Lakes Trail, the North Country National Scenic Trail, the Old Erie Canal Trail, the statewide snowmobile corridor trail route and other smaller trails in the area.
- **Long Island Greenbelt Trail System** – A recreational and educational footpath network, which is accessible to approximately two-million state residents. The Nassau-Suffolk (26 miles) and the Long Island Greenbelt trails (34 miles) connect the Long Island Sound and South Shore resource areas. Further east, the evolving Paumanock Trail will stretch some 100 miles across the length of the Peconic Bay and Long Island Pine Barrens resource area, from Rocky Point to Montauk Point.
- **North Country National Scenic Trail** – A roughly 4,600-mile congressionally mandated non-motorized trail that winds from the plains of North Dakota through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and through Western and Central New York, where it follows the route of the Finger Lakes Trail and eventually into the City of Rome. Portions of the trail north of Rome to

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

the Adirondack Park boundary have been completed. The eventual Adirondack Park route remains a topic of study; however, the congressionally mandated beginning point of the trail is on the banks of Lake Champlain at Crown Point, Essex County.

- **Remsen–Lake Placid Travel Corridor** – A 122-mile-long abandoned railroad corridor which traverses some of the most remote lands of the western and northern Adirondacks.
- **Northville–Lake Placid Trail** – A long-distance hiking and backpacking trail that extends 133 miles from Northville to Lake Placid.

**STATEWIDE SMALL PROJECTS {140.}** – This category includes nine sub-categories of small projects and brief descriptions of examples of acquired small projects and criteria used to define them: Public Fishing Right Easements, Waterway Access, Enhancement of Public Lands, Significant Rare Habitats, Significant Historic Archeological Resources, and Trail and Greenway Connections, Stream Buffer Easements, Important Birding Areas, and Aquatic Connectivity. Individual items within this project are not to exceed \$425,000 in cost or 200 acres in size.

- 1) **Public Fishing Stream & River Access Projects:** Provide access for angling through easements along rivers and streams. Example: Easements on about 3/4-mile of the Ausable River in Essex County, acquired in 2000 for \$24,775 using Bond Act funds.
- 2) **Waterway Access:** Provide access to state waters for boating activities, including canoeing and kayaking, and acquisition and development of above-grade crossings of active railroad right-of-ways. Example: A 1.4-acre parcel was acquired in 1997 in Sullivan County to provide access to the Delaware River, using EPF monies.
- 3) **Enhancement of Public Lands:** Provide access to public lands with no access or severely limited access due to geographic barriers; or enhance land-management functions by securing inholdings or adjacent parcels to public lands. Example: In 1995, the last remaining inholding (4 acres) in J. B. Thatcher State Park was purchased for \$16,000.
- 4) **Rare Habitats:** Protects habitats for rare plant or animal species or rare natural communities. Rarity is defined as 25 or fewer sites in the state. Example: Habitat for the endangered bog turtle was protected with a \$40,000 purchase of a 2.8-acre wetland addition to the Bog Brook Unique Area in Putnam County.
- 5) **Historic & Archeological Resources:** Protect historic and archeological resources that are eligible for listing or are listed on the state or National Register of Historic Places. Example: The Wetterhahn Site is an archaeological site of a small pre-contact St. Lawrence Iroquois village (circa 1400 AD) in Jefferson County. The site, comprising 11 acres, was jointly acquired by DEC and OPRHP in 2000. Fee ownership of seven acres was purchased for \$16,000. An additional four acres which contains a part of the resource was protected by a donated conservation easement. This site represents only the third Iroquois site in protected state ownership.
- 6) **Trail & Greenway Connections:** Provide connecting links to fill small gaps in existing trails, such as the Appalachian Trail, Northville–Lake Placid Trail, Long Path, North Country National Scenic Trail and Finger Lakes Trail; to make connections among trails and fill gaps in greenway corridors such as the Niagara River Greenway. Example: A four-acre parcel in the Town of Arkwright, Chautauqua

## REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

---

County was acquired in 2000 to provide a trail connection over the Canadaway Creek linking to state-owned parcels at a cost of \$16,200.

- 7) **Stream Buffer Easements:** Provide for maintenance of stream buffers to protect water quality and wildlife habitat. Stream buffers have been shown to protect watersheds from pollution in stormwater runoff and from flooding caused by stormwater. Easements could incorporate vegetation types and conservation plantings. This category could be used as part of a watershed protection program for surface drinking water sources and for aquifer recharge areas.
- 8) **Important Bird Areas<sup>^</sup>:** Provide protection through acquisition or easement for areas designated by the Audubon Society as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The Audubon Society recognizes that these sites provide essential habitat for breeding, wintering, and/or migratory use. They generally have unique qualities which make them important for birds.



# LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

## RESOURCE INVENTORIES

Our State, along with various federal agencies, develops and maintains resource inventories that can be used by local governments, interest groups and others to assist in conserving open space. Decisions about open space conservation must be based both on analysis of resource data and on citizen opinion. The inventories below identify the natural, cultural and recreational resources and protected lands maintained by federal and state agencies. This information helps with the process of deciding what lands and resources may need further protection. It has been available to and used by the staffs of DEC, OPRHP, DOS and the Regional Advisory Committees throughout the development of this Plan.

### GENERAL GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) RESOURCES

#### NYS GIS CLEARINGHOUSE

*[gis.ny.gov](http://gis.ny.gov)*

The clearinghouse contains extensive information about New York's Geographic Information System (GIS) coordinating body, the Data Sharing Cooperative, applications to view and download digital orthographic photographs, information on and links to GIS education and training opportunities, other state and federal GIS resources, GIS user groups throughout New York, and GIS-related list servers. Organizations and individuals interested in open space planning and conservation are encouraged to visit the web site and to join the Data Sharing Cooperative.

#### DEC MAPS AND GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

*[www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/212.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/212.html)*

Maps and interactive mapping applications currently available online from NYSDEC

#### ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE MAPPER

*[www.dec.ny.gov/imsmaps/ERM/viewer.htm](http://www.dec.ny.gov/imsmaps/ERM/viewer.htm)*

The Environmental Resource Mapper is an interactive mapping application that can be used to identify some of New York State's natural resources and environmental features that are state protected or of conservation concern.

#### CORNELL UNIVERSITY GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION REPOSITORY

*[cugir.mannlib.cornell.edu](http://cugir.mannlib.cornell.edu)*

#### NEW YORK PROTECTED AREAS DATABASE

*[www.nypad.org](http://www.nypad.org)*

New York Protected Areas Database (NYPAD) is a spatial database of lands protected, designated, or

functioning as open space, natural areas, conservation lands, or recreational areas. These lands cover over six million acres—approximately 20% of New York State. Lands in NYPAD may be public or private, open or closed to public use, permanently protected from development or subject to future changes in management. The data in NYPAD can be viewed in the interactive map or downloaded for use with a GIS or other mapping application.

### SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL and WILDLIFE RESOURCES

#### ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE MAPPER

[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html)

The Environmental Resource Mapper is an interactive mapping application that can be used to identify some of New York State's natural resources and environmental features that are state protected or of conservation concern.

#### NY NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM DATA

[www.guides.nynhp.org](http://www.guides.nynhp.org)

NY Natural Heritage provides detailed information on the location, conservation, and management of rare species and significant natural communities to a broad audience of natural resource decision-makers, including land managers, local governments, and landowners. Because information on the locations of rare species is considered sensitive, data release guidelines limit the level and type of data made available in different circumstances. Subject to these guidelines, NY Natural Heritage data can be obtained from NYSDEC regional offices as well as from the Information Services section of the NY Natural Heritage Program.

Information Services, NY Natural Heritage Program, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4757  
518 -402-8935

*or*

NYSDEC Regional Offices, [www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html)

#### COMPREHENSIVE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30483.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30483.html)

New York State's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) addresses species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) not traditionally funded for management purposes. Critical habitats, stressors/impacts to natural resources, research, survey, and restoration needs, and priority conservation actions are identified. As such, the strategy is the primary vehicle for biodiversity conservation in New York for years to come. Continued federal funding to states, begun in 2001, is critical to implementing this effort.

The CWCS, which has identified more than 530 species that require conservation efforts—including birds, mammals, mollusks, freshwater and marine fish, and crustaceans—identifies the role of private landowners in these conservation efforts and recommends the creation of a habitat conservation

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

program. The program will encourage landowners to make land-use decisions that protect and preserve important habitats and also expand opportunities for the public to access and enjoy the abundant natural resources located on private lands.

NYSDEC-DFWMR, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4753  
518-402-8920

### **BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE LIBRARY**

*[www.biodiversitylibrary.org](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org)*

The Biodiversity Heritage Library works collaboratively to make biodiversity literature openly available to the world as part of a global biodiversity community.

### **AUDUBON'S IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS**

*[web4.audubon.org/bird/iba](http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba)*

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are sites that have been formally recognized by National Audubon Society as providing essential habitat to one or more species of breeding or non-breeding birds. The sites vary in size but are usually discrete and distinguishable in character, habitat or ornithological importance from surrounding areas.

Audubon New York, Important Bird Areas Program, c/o Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca, NY 14850. 800-843-2473

### **DEC'S BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30935.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30935.html)*

The New York State Bird Conservation Area Program was established in 1997 to safeguard and enhance bird populations and their habitats on state lands and waters. The goal of this program is to integrate bird conservation interests into agency planning, management and research projects within the context of agency missions.

NYSDEC, Division of FWMR, Non-game and Habitat Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. 518-402-8924

## WETLANDS

### **NATIONAL WETLANDS INVENTORY MAPS**

*[www.fws.gov/wetlands](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands)*

*[www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html)*

The most comprehensive survey of wetlands at this time is through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory. Mapping was not done within the Adirondack Park. Comprehensive Survey U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

### PROTECTED WETLAND MAPS

*cugir.mannlib.cornell.edu*

Digital data is available for those with GIS capabilities through Cornell University's Geospatial Information Repository (CUGIR).

### STATE REGULATORY FRESHWATER WETLANDS (Outside Adirondack Park)

*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5124.html*

NYS regulates and has mapped freshwater wetlands that are 12.4 acres in size or larger and certain smaller wetlands of unusual local importance. Wetland maps are available at DEC offices and local government offices and are shown on the Environmental Resource Mapper.

(*www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html*) on the DEC website.

### ADIRONDACK PARK FRESHWATER WETLANDS

*www.apa.ny.gov/Research/epa\_projects.htm*

Adirondack Park Agency, P.O. Box 99, Ray Brook, NY 12977. 518-891-3938

### TIDAL WETLANDS

*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4940.html*

NYS regulates and has mapped tidal wetlands. Inventory information for tidal wetlands was collected for the Tidal Wetlands Regulatory Program using 1974 aerial imagery. Limited tidal wetlands trends analysis work has been completed for tidal wetland complexes in the marine district, and efforts are currently underway to advance the trends analysis work.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N Belle Meade Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733. 631-444-0452

## PUBLIC FOREST LANDS

### ADIRONDACK and CATSKILL FOREST PRESERVE MAPS

*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4960.html*

The Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve consists of lands owned by New York State within the Adirondack and Catskill regions under the management of DEC's Division of Lands and Forests. Forest Preserve lands are protected as "forever wild" by Article XIV, Section 1 of the State Constitution. Forest Preserve lands are acquired for the preservation of open space and for public recreation. In the Adirondack Park, there are 2,907,000 acres of Forest Preserve. The Catskill Park contains 281,000 acres of Forest Preserve lands.

DEC offices in Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6  
and

NYSDEC, Division of Lands and Forests, Forest Preserve Bureau, 625 Broadway, Albany, New York,



## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

12233-4255. 518-473-9518

### STATE FORESTS

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/40672.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/40672.html)

State forests are lands owned by New York State under the management of DEC's Division of Lands and Forests. These lands are acquired pursuant to Title 5, Article 9 of the ECL for open space and watershed protection, timber production and recreation. There are 776,000 acres of State Forests across New York State.

NYSDEC, Bureau of State Land Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4255. 518-402-9428

### FINGER LAKES NATIONAL FOREST

[www.fs.usda.gov/main/gmfl/home](http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/gmfl/home)

The only national forest in NYS encompasses 16,212 acres.

Hector Ranger District, 5218 State Rt. 414, Hector, NY 14841. 607-546-4470

## RECREATION

### STATE PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES

[nysparks.com/parks](http://nysparks.com/parks)

[nysparks.com/historic-sites](http://nysparks.com/historic-sites)

From the shores of Long Island to Niagara Falls, New York's 179 state parks offer countless opportunities to explore our natural environment via beaches, boat launches, hiking trails, campsites, and golf courses.

New York's historic sites tell the story of our rich cultural heritage through tours, storytelling, exhibits, cooking demonstrations, military drills and encampments.

### PUBLIC RECREATION LANDS MANAGED BY DEC

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82098.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82098.html)

DEC provides descriptive pages with maps for each unit it manages, including forest preserve, state forests, wildlife management areas, campgrounds and conservation easements.

### MARINE WATERWAY ACCESS SITES

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7780.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7780.html)

The Bureau of Marine Resources manages four Marine Waterway Access Sites (MWAS) in New York's Marine and Coastal District (MCD). All facilities contain a boat ramp and provide unrestricted access to the MCD. Some sites have floating docks for vessel launch and recovery, canoe and kayak launches, marine pumpout stations, and fishing and wildlife viewing areas. The MWAS provide access to the Long Island Sound and tributaries and Moriches Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

### **MARINE ARTIFICIAL REEFS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7896.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7896.html)*

The Bureau of Marine Resources Artificial Reef Program (ARP) manages 11 artificial reef sites in New York's Marine and Coastal District and adjacent federal waters. Reef sites are strategically located near Long Island bay and harbor inlets. Sites collectively encompass over 2,500 acres employing secondary-use materials to enhance underwater marine habitat. Artificial reefs have provided additional fishing and diving opportunities since 1962 and are popular destinations for both anglers and divers.

### **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html)*

Our State has more than 85 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) that are designated for hunting, fishing, hiking and wildlife watching. These are public lands managed by DEC and are among our forests, open fields, streams, ponds, wetlands and scenic vistas—nearly 200,000 acres, including 124,000 acres of upland and 53,000 acres of wetland.

NYSDEC Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4755. 518-402-8924

### **STATE TIDAL WETLAND AREAS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/81055.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/81055.html)*

Tidal wetland areas provide opportunities for fishing, hiking, canoeing, and seasonal small and big game hunting in upland and salt water wetland habitats.

### **MOTORIZED ACCESS PERMIT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (MAPPWD)**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/2574.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/2574.html)*

NYSDEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4255. 518-402-9428

### **STATE OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES INVENTORY**

NYS OPRHP – Bureau of Planning, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12238. 518-486-2909

### **STATE LANDS INTERACTIVE MAP**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html)*

The State Recreational Lands Interactive Mapper shows most recreational trails, parking lots and access points offered by DEC, along with a statewide trail dataset for MAPPWD (Motorized Access Permit for People With Disabilities). Trails shown are DEC officially recognized trails on lands managed by the Division of Lands and Forests, mainly on State Forests and Forest Preserve lands.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**STATE and NATIONAL REGISTERS OF HISTORIC PLACES**

*nysparks.com/shpo*

The state and national Register of Historic Places programs provide listings of historic resources of national, state and local significance. In New York State, OPRHP coordinates statewide historic preservation efforts, administers state-owned historic sites and facilities and, along with the New York State Museum, maintains an inventory of archaeological sites.

NYS OPRHP – Bureau of Historic Sites, Peebles Island, Waterford, NY 12188-0189  
518-237-8643

**STATE HERITAGE AREAS**

*nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-areas.aspx*

Over 25 years after development of the Urban Cultural Park system, there are 18 active Heritage Areas encompassing over 400 municipalities. The system remains the oldest and one of the largest, statewide heritage systems in the country.

NYS OPRHP – Heritage Areas, Peebles Island, Waterford, NY 12188-0189. 518-237-8643

**NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS**

*www.nps.gov/heritageareas*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

*nysparks.com/shpo/archeology*

Archeological data may be accessed through NYS OPRHP. Many local museums, universities and colleges can also provide information on archaeological resources.

NYS OPRHP, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, Peebles Island, NY 12188-0189  
and  
New York State Museum, Anthropological Services, CEC 3097, Albany, NY 12230

**GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

*www.nysm.nysed.gov/research-collections/geology/gis*

The State Geologist, in cooperation with the NYS Geological Society and the geology departments at many of the state's colleges and universities, has identified numerous areas of geologic importance for study and research.

State Geological Survey, State Education Department, Albany, New York 12230

### PRIVATE WORKING LANDS

#### CONSERVATION EASEMENT DATABASE

A database of conservation easements held by not-for-profit organizations and by DEC is maintained by

NYSDEC – Bureau of Real Property, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4256. 518-402-9442

#### AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT and MAPS

*[www.agriculture.ny.gov](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov)*

Inventory and maps of agricultural districts and areas under Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25-AA (see Programs and Partners).

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, 10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235  
and

- Cornell University's Institute for Resource Information Systems
- County Planning Offices
- County Cooperative Extensions
- County Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Natural Resources Conservation Service Offices

### WATER RESOURCES

#### ADIRONDACK LAKES SURVEY CORPORATION

*[www.adirondacklakessurvey.org](http://www.adirondacklakessurvey.org)*

Water analysis on chemical and biological parameters has been conducted by the Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation (ALSC) on 1,469 waters in the Adirondacks and 223 waters in the Hudson Highlands, Catskills and Rensselaer Plateau regions of the state. ALSC was originally developed as a cooperative effort between DEC and the Empire State Electric Energy Research Corporation in 1983. In addition to the Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation's efforts, chemical, biological and physical data collected in field surveys since the 1930s for each of the state's 18 watersheds serve as the basis for development of DEC's Biological Survey database of the state's aquatic resources.

#### WILD, SCENIC and RECREATIONAL RIVERS

*[www.dec.ny.gov/permits/32739.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/32739.html)*

The Wild Scenic and Recreational River System Act establishes a means of providing protection for river corridors from development through land-use controls. Rivers are placed in the system by legislative enactment. Regulated corridors are administered by DEC except for private lands within the Adirondack Park where the Adirondack Park Agency has administrative responsibility. DEC regulations implementing the program are found at 6 NYCRR Part 666.

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

NYSDEC – Bureau of Habitat, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4756. 518- 402-8920

### **ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY WILD, SCENIC and RECREATIONAL RIVERS**

[www.apa.ny.gov/Regulations/index.html](http://www.apa.ny.gov/Regulations/index.html)

### **PROTECTION OF WATERS**

**Protection of Waters Program** [www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6042.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6042.html)

**Regulations** [www.dec.ny.gov/regs/2485.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/regs/2485.html)

**Environmental Resource Mapper** [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html)

### **PROTECTION OF WATERS PROGRAM**

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6042.html>

The policy of New York State as set forth in Title 5 of Article 15 of the ECL is to preserve and protect state waters, including streams. The Protection of Waters Program regulates four categories:

- Disturbances of the bed or banks of a protected stream (streams classified as AA, A, B, or C(t) or C(ts);
- Construction and maintenance of dams or Impoundment structures;
- Construction, reconstruction, or repair of docks and installation of mooring structures in, on or above navigable waters lying above underwater lands not owned by the State; and
- Excavation and/or filling in navigable waters.

Any regulated activity described and to be undertaken on a protected stream requires a permit from DEC.

### **FLOODPLAIN – MAPS**

[msc.fema.gov](http://msc.fema.gov)

Article 36 of the ECL requires the State and local communities to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. For the purpose of reducing flood hazards and losses and to enable communities to regulate development in floodplains, the federal government has identified flood prone areas. There are 1,419 flood prone communities with over 26,000 miles of rivers, streams and shorelines affected. Maps and a status listing of all affected communities are on file in:

NYSDEC Regional Offices

[www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html)

DEC, Bureau of Flood Protection, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233. 518-402-8151

### **AQUIFER RECHARGE AREA – MAPS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/36064.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/36064.html)

Final Source Water Assessment Program Plan [www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/water/swap.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/water/swap.htm) Article 15 of the ECL calls for the prohibition of incompatible uses over federally designated sole-source

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

aquifers. Map sets locating the boundaries of the 18 primary aquifers as designated by the NYS Department of Health can be viewed at:

NYSDEC, Bureau of Water Resource Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-3508. 518-402-8086

### LONG ISLAND AQUIFER – MAPS

NYSDEC, Region 1, SUNY @ Stony Brook, 50 Circle Road, Stony Brook, NY 11790-3409. 631-444-0405

### COASTAL and ESTUARINE RESOURCES

[www.dos.ny.gov/opd](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd)

The Department of State has developed a variety of GIS data to support the state's Coastal Management Program and Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (LWRPs), which are prepared and implemented in cooperation with local governments. GIS digital datasets for the state's coastal area boundary, the coastal non-point pollution control program boundary, designated significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats and scenic areas of statewide significance (SASS), and benthic habitats of the south shore estuary of Long Island can be viewed at:

### NYS GIS Clearinghouse

[gis.ny.gov](http://gis.ny.gov)

and

NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010 Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

### COASTAL EROSION HAZARD AREA – MAPS

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/28923.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/28923.html)

Natural protective features are found in coastal erosion hazard areas as defined pursuant to Section 34-0104 of the ECL. These features include beaches, dunes, bluffs, shoals and barrier islands and serve to maintain and stabilize the quality of contiguous and associated saline and fresh waters. Maps of coastal erosion hazard areas are **on file** in:

NYSDEC regional offices

[www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html)

and

DEC, Bureau of Flood Protection, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233. 518-402-8151

### OCEANS AND ESTUARIES

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/207.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/207.html)

The southern part of New York State sits on the shore of the northern Atlantic Ocean. The current coming up the shoreline and the freshwater rivers and streams draining into the ocean mix around the New York City and Long Island area create several distinct estuaries that flourish with marine life.

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

The Peconic Estuary, Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve, New York/New Jersey Harbor and Hudson River Estuary are the four estuaries in this area, each with its unique geographical layout. NYSDEC, along with the EPA, other state agencies, and local municipalities, devised management plans for each of these areas to address their different aspects of problems and protection strategies.

## PROGRAMS and PARTNERS

Many government and not-for-profit organizations and programs can help with open space conservation and provide more information on various topics. In addition to those listed here, local governments are key players.

The following programs and partners are organized to coincide with the related section of the Plan.

### **Promoting Outdoor Recreation**

- Recreational Access for All
- Connecting our Children with Nature
- Providing Urban Waterfront Access, Urban Greenways and Trailways
- Connecting Our Open Corridors

### **Addressing Climate Change**

- Protecting Our Coastlines
- Establishing Riparian Buffers and Wetland Protections
- Mitigation and Adaptation through Sustainable Forestry
- Promoting Urban Forestry and Green Infrastructure

### **Ensuring Clean Water, Air and Land for a Healthy Public and Vibrant Economy**

- Providing Watershed and Water Quality Protections
- Community Greening for Environmental Justice
- Health Benefits of Forests and Open Space
- Connecting to Our Food and Our Neighborhoods
- Promoting Smart Growth and Improving Our Transportation Uses

### **Safeguarding Our State's Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage**

- Supporting Our Working Farms and Forests
- Stewarding Our Open Spaces
- Preserving Our Scenic, Historic and Cultural Heritage



## PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

### Recreational Access for All

#### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

##### **Accessible Outdoor Recreation**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html)*

Universal Access means providing recreation opportunities for everyone—from the oldest adult to the youngest child and everyone in between, including people with disabilities. DEC is committed to providing an ever increasing range of access opportunities to programs on New York State public lands. In recent years, DEC has created wheelchair accessible campsites, fishing piers, picnic areas, equestrian mounting platforms, trails and waterway access sites across the state and has increased efforts to make all programs and services inclusive. This Universal Design approach invites people of all ages and abilities to become active in outdoor recreation. 518-402-9428

##### **Becoming An Outdoors-Woman**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/68.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/68.html)*

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) and Beyond BOW are national programs designed to teach women outdoor skills. These programs provide women with information, encouragement and hands-on instruction in outdoor skills such as fishing, shooting, archery, hunting, trapping, outdoor photography, map and compass, survival, camping, canoeing and outdoor cooking. BOW workshops are designed primarily for women who have little or no experience with outdoor activities. Beyond BOW workshops are classes for women who have completed a beginner BOW workshop. 518-402-8862

##### **Sportsmen Education**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7860.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7860.html)*

All first-time hunters, bowhunters and trappers must pass one or more courses before they can get a license in New York State. Trained instructors certified by the Department of Environmental Conservation teach safe and responsible outdoor practices and the important role of hunters and trappers in conservation. All courses are free of charge, but space may be limited. Courses develop skills and attitudes which help students to be better hunters and trappers, support conservation, and pursue outdoor sports in a safe, responsible and ethical manner. 518-402-8966

#### OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION and HISTORIC PRESERVATION

##### **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**

*[nysparks.com/recreation/trails/statewide-plans.aspx](http://nysparks.com/recreation/trails/statewide-plans.aspx)*

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), produced periodically by the

OPRHP, serves as a status report and as an overall guideline for recreation resource preservation, planning and development.

### **Statewide Trails Program And Statewide Trails Plan**

*[nysparks.com/recreation/trails](http://nysparks.com/recreation/trails)*

*[nysparks.com/recreation/trails/statewide-plans.aspx](http://nysparks.com/recreation/trails/statewide-plans.aspx)*

Trails serve as recreational resources and alternative transportation routes and contribute to the economy of the state. From rugged foot paths in the Adirondacks to paved greenway trails along the Manhattan waterfront, our trails are as diverse as the communities which host them. State Parks is charged with coordinating and developing a statewide plan for trails. Working with our partners in other state agencies, regional and statewide trail organizations, and dozens of local trail stewards, Parks assists in the development and maintenance of an extensive network of trails offering year-round recreational opportunities.

### **PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK**

*[www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)*

This not-for-profit organization advocates statewide for parks and trails. Parks & Trails New York works with community organizations and municipalities to envision, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks and more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, and trails throughout New York State. 518-434-1583. [ptny@ptny.org](mailto:ptny@ptny.org)

### **Connecting our Children with Nature**

### **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

#### **Environmental Education Centers and Camps**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/74.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/74.html)*

DEC's Bureau of Environmental Education operates four environmental education centers and four environmental education summer camps across the state. These facilities and programs serve an important role of connecting New Yorkers to nature. The proximity of some of the sites to urban and suburban areas suggests the need to ensure that adequate buffer zones exist to insulate them from encroachment. Each of the education centers is supported by a corps of volunteers through their "friends" groups. Friends groups provide manpower for education programs for schools and the public, trail maintenance, greeting visitors, hosting special events, and more. They also raise funds for special programs, projects and purchases.

#### **Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/1833.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1833.html)*

The Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center partners with the Stony Kill Foundation and Verplanck Garden Club.

DEC Stony Kill Farm, Environmental Education Center, 79 Farmstead Lane, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590. 845-831-8780. skfarm@dec.ny.gov

**Five Rivers Environmental Education Center**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html)*

The Five Rivers Environmental Education Center partners with Friends of Fiver Rivers/Five Rivers Limited.

DEC Five Rivers, Environmental Education Center, 56 Game Farm Road, Delmar, NY 12054. 518-475-0291. 5Rivers@dec.ny.gov

**Rogers Environmental Education Center**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/1831.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1831.html)*

The Rogers Environmental Education Center partners with Friends of Rogers.

DEC Rogers Environmental Education Center, 2721 State Highway 80, Sherburne, NY 13460. 607-674-4017. rogers@dec.ny.gov

**REINSTEIN WOODS NATURE PRESERVE and ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/1837.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1837.html)*

The Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve and Environmental Education Center partners with Friends of Reinstein Nature Preserve.

Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve and Environmental Education Center, 93 Honorine Drive, Depew, NY 14043. 716-683-5959. rwnp@dec.ny.gov

**LONG ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/1839.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1839.html)*

DEC's Long Island education staff offers hands-on fun and educational environmental programs on Long Island, including environmental science programs for students, scouts, and other members of the public with the goal of engendering a sense of stewardship for our natural resources.

Long Island, Regional Environmental Educator, DEC Region 1 Office, SUNY @ Stony Brook, 50 Circle Road, Stony Brook, NY 11790-3009. 631-444-0347. education1@dec.ny.gov

**NEW YORK CITY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/38184.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/38184.html)*

DEC's NYC Environmental Education staff offer programs including the After School Conservation Club (ASCC) program, the NYC Camps Diversity Program, professional

development programs for educators, and public outreach and school programs with the goal of increasing environmental awareness to foster more informed decision-making and get youth and adults out studying and enjoying their local environment.

New York City, Regional Environmental Educator, DEC Region 2 Office, 47-40 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Long Island City, NY 11101. 718-482-6404. r2ed@dec.ny.gov

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CAMPS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html)

Four camps are currently in operation: Camp Colby (Saranac Lake), Camp DeBruce (Livingston Manor), Camp Rushford (Caneadea), and Camp Pack Forest (Warrensburg). Together, they serve close to 1,900 youth from 12 to 17-years old from across the state annually. They receive camper sponsorships from local garden clubs, hunting/fishing clubs and nature-study groups. Programs at the camps focus on natural resource and environmental studies. Interested campers may participate in hunter safety training. Efforts will be made to increase the number of opportunities which exist for youth to attend a DEC environmental education camp. 518 - 402-8043. edcamps@dec.ny.gov

### **TEACHER WORKSHOPS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/26.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/26.html)

[www.dec.ny.gov/education/1913.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1913.html)

Professional development workshops for educators and youth leaders are offered throughout the state. Participants receive a curriculum guide, an opportunity to try activities and a variety of support materials. E-mail individual program contacts provided on the webpages. 518-402-8043

### **NYS ENVIROTHON**

[www.nysenvirothon.net](http://www.nysenvirothon.net)

The NYS Envirothon is a hands-on environmental education competition where a team of five high school students works together to win scholarships and awards. Teams compete in five different environmental categories (i.e., soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, and wildlife) and a current environmental issue. NYS Envirothon is conducted on a county-level basis with Soil & Water Conservation Districts being the lead for incorporating efforts from the many natural resource agencies at federal, state and local levels. It is directed to promote knowledge and understanding of natural resources among students.

New York State Envirothon, c/o Sandy Huey, Chair, 7413 County House Road, Auburn, New York. 315-252-4171, Ext. 3. E-mail: blanche\_13335@yahoo.com

### **AFTER SCHOOL CONSERVATION CLUB**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/education/38184.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/38184.html)*

The After School Conservation Club partners with the Student Conservation Association, United Neighborhood Houses and the After-School Corporation to bring environmental education to and foster a sense of stewardship in inner-city elementary schoolchildren involved in after-school programs.

DEC Regional New York City, Environmental Educator. 718-482-6404  
r2ed@dec.ny.gov

### **I FISH NY**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/89362.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/89362.html)*

The I FISH NY program was developed by DEC with the primary goal of increasing fishing participation in New York State. This will be accomplished by increasing public awareness of the outstanding fishing opportunities available in New York; providing information on the fishing techniques/skills necessary to make best use of these opportunities; increasing knowledge of the fish and aquatic resources of the State; and improving fishing opportunities in suburban and urban areas where the bulk of the state's population resides.

518-402-8924.

### **NATIONAL ARCHERY IN THE SCHOOLS**

*[www.naspschools.org](http://www.naspschools.org)*

In January 2008, New York became the 44th state to participate in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). The program promotes student education, physical education, and participation in the lifelong sport of archery. Currently, 214 schools from 123 districts participate in this program. More than 30,000 children participated in the program during the 2012-2013 school year.

### **JUNIOR BIG GAME HUNTER MENTORING PROGRAM**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/46245.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/46245.html)*

The Junior Big Game Mentoring program allows youth aged 14 and 15 to hunt big game with a firearm while accompanied and supervised by an experienced adult hunter. This program provides an excellent opportunity for youth to get outdoors and experience hunting in a safe and supervised environment.

NYSDEC Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. 518-402-8883

### **JUNIOR TRAPPING MENTORING PROGRAM**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/46191.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/46191.html)*

The Junior Trapping Mentoring program allows children less than 12 years old to accompany and assist a licensed trapper who has at least 3 years of trapping experience in all aspects of

trapping. The licensed trapper may be a parent or legal guardian, or someone 18 years or older designated in writing.

NYSDEC Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. 518-402-8883

### **SPECIAL YOUTH HUNTS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/52495.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/52495.html)

To help provide young hunters with a high-quality experience under adult supervision, special weekends have been designated for youth hunters to pursue deer, waterfowl, pheasants, and wild turkey prior to the general season opening date for these species. For all youth hunts, junior hunters must be accompanied by a licensed adult hunter.

NYSDEC Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. 518-402-8883

### ***Conservationist for Kids***

#### **MAGAZINE**

[www.dec.ny.gov/education/40248.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/40248.html)

This magazine, published three times each year, encourages outdoor exploration and discovery. It is written for fourth-grade students in New York State and is distributed directly to all fourth-grade public school classes in the state. It is also inserted in *Conservationist* magazine and available on the Internet.

[cforkids@dec.ny.gov](mailto:cforkids@dec.ny.gov)

### ***Outdoor Discovery***

#### **ONLINE NEWSLETTER**

[www.dec.ny.gov/public/84455.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/84455.html)

This monthly electronic newsletter encourages New Yorkers to explore the outdoors and learn about the environment. Each issue introduces subscribers to a seasonal environmental or nature topic, suggests a related activity, and lists family-friendly events at DEC's environmental education centers.

[outdoor@dec.ny.gov](mailto:outdoor@dec.ny.gov)

## **OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

### **NATURE CENTERS**

[nysparks.com/environment/nature-centers](http://nysparks.com/environment/nature-centers)

### Providing Urban Waterfront Access, Urban Greenways and Trailways

#### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

##### **WATERFRONT RECREATION**

Fishing and boating (both motorized and non-motorized) have been demonstrated to be outstanding mechanisms for getting New Yorkers back in touch with the outdoor world. Given the fact that public access to the waters of the State is not guaranteed and the availability of waterfront property necessary for public access projects is limited, focus must be given to developing access on waterfront lands DEC currently owns and modernizing existing public access sites. In addition to ramps and hand-launching facilities for boats, waterway access must also include fishing piers and shoreline improvements accessible to all New Yorkers, regardless of their physical abilities.

NYSDEC – Bureau of Fisheries. 518-402-8924

NYSDEC – Bureau of Marine Resources. 631-444-0438

##### **FEDERAL SPORT FISH RESTORATION**

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7923.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7923.html)

The federal Sport Fish Restoration Fund was created in 1950 when the United States Congress passed the Dingell-Johnson (or D-J) Act. This act created a special fund derived from a ten percent federal excise tax paid on fishing rods, reels, creels, artificial lures, baits and flies by those who manufactured them. In 1984, Congress significantly enhanced the Sport Fish Restoration Fund by passing the Wallop-Breaux Amendment to the original act. The legislation expanded the basic D-J funds by including new items not previously taxed and allocating a portion of the Highway Trust Fund Fuel Tax to expand contributions by boaters. In 1998, the Wallop-Breaux Amendment was reauthorized.

Funds are allocated to the states based on the number of licensed anglers and land area in a particular state. New York receives about \$9 million annually, which is currently committed to the management and protection of aquatic resources, sport fishing research and management, development and rehabilitation of boating and fishing access sites and aquatic education.

NYSDEC – Bureau of Fisheries. 518-402-8924

NYSDEC – Bureau of Marine Resources 631-444-0438

##### **PUBLIC FISHING RIGHTS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7746.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7746.html)

Public Fishing Rights (PFRs) are permanent easements purchased by DEC from private landowners, giving sportsman right-of-way access to fish and walk along the bank. Fishing rights also allow the public to park in designated parking areas and to access the stream via

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

marked footpaths. Angler parking areas as well as “rights-of-way” are also needed to complement the easements. More than 1,300 miles of public fishing rights (PFR) easements have been purchased on more than 400 streams across the state.

518-402-8924. [fwfish@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fwfish@dec.ny.gov)

### DEPARTMENT OF STATE

#### **LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION and HARBOR MANAGEMENT**

[www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/lwrp.html](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/lwrp.html)

The New York State Department of State (DOS) is involved in a wide variety of programs and initiatives that help revitalize, promote and protect New York's waterfronts. Over the past 20 years, DOS has worked with hundreds of local governments and communities to prepare Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (LWRPs). A LWRP is a locally prepared, comprehensive land and water-use plan for a community's natural, public, working waterfront, and for developed waterfront resources. It provides a comprehensive framework within which critical waterfront issues can be addressed.

#### **HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLANS**

[www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/lwrp.html](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/lwrp.html)

Harbor Management Plans (HMPs) are prepared as components of LWRPs to improve management of local harbors. HMPs take a hard look at the resources, conflicts, congestion and competition for space in New York's harbors and balance the interests of all uses of harbor resources. These plans consider local and regional needs and address issues related to commercial shipping and fishing, dredging, recreational boating and fishing, natural resource protection, and other matters affecting harbors.

NYS Department of State, Office of Communities and Waterfronts, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010, Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

### OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION and HISTORIC PRESERVATION

#### **STATEWIDE TRAILS PROGRAM AND STATEWIDE TRAILS PLAN**

[nysparks.com/recreation/trails](http://nysparks.com/recreation/trails)

[nysparks.com/recreation/trails/statewide-plans.aspx](http://nysparks.com/recreation/trails/statewide-plans.aspx)

Trails serve as recreational resources and alternative transportation routes and contribute to the economy of the state. From rugged foot paths in the Adirondacks to paved greenway trails along the Manhattan waterfront, our trails are as diverse as the communities which host them. OPRHP is charged with coordinating and developing a statewide plan for trails. Working with partners in other state agencies, regional and statewide trail organizations, and dozens of local trail stewards, OPRHP assists in the development and maintenance of an extensive network of



trails offering year-round recreational opportunities

### **NYS HERITAGE AREAS**

[nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-areas.aspx](http://nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-areas.aspx)

The Heritage Area System (formerly known as the Urban Cultural Park System) is a state-local partnership established to preserve and develop areas that have special significance to New York State. From the Great Lakes to the eastern tip of Long Island, Heritage Areas encompass some of the state's most significant natural, historic, and cultural resources.

### **NYS HERITAGE TRAILS**

[nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-trails](http://nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-trails)

A series of thematic Heritage topics has been established in New York State to connect historic sites and museums and help visitors discover the unique history of the state. This program of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, was developed to highlight significant statewide historical themes—the Revolutionary War, Women, the Underground Railroad and Theodore Roosevelt. A major goal of the program is to promote heritage tourism by strengthening existing tourist destinations and fostering new ones. By linking and interpreting sites thematically, visitors will gain a more comprehensive understanding of the state's important role in the history of our nation and will be encouraged to visit more sites. The program also promotes collaboration among local communities and regional organizations to make the sites more accessible and marketable.

NYS OPRHP, 625 Broadway, Albany NY, 12238, 518-474-0456

NYS Historic Preservation Office, Peebles Island Resource Center, P.O. Box 189, Waterford, NY 12188-0189. 518-237-8643

### **HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY**

[www.hudsongreenway.ny.gov](http://www.hudsongreenway.ny.gov)

The Hudson River Valley Greenway is an innovative state agency created to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources, while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land-use decision-making. Through voluntary participation in the Greenway community planning program, communities in 13 counties in the Hudson River Valley can receive technical assistance and funding for local land-use planning projects which support the goals of the Greenway program.

518-473-3835. [hrvg@hudsongreenway.ny.gov](mailto:hrvg@hudsongreenway.ny.gov)

### **NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY**

[www.niagaragreenway.org](http://www.niagaragreenway.org)

The mission of the Niagara River Greenway is “To continue and advance the state's commitment to the preservation, enhancement and development of the world-renowned scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources of the Niagara River Greenway Commission while continuing to emphasize economic development activities and remaining consistent with the tradition of municipal home rule.”

### Connecting our Open Space Corridors

#### NEW YORK PROTECTED AREAS DATABASE

*[www.nypad.org](http://www.nypad.org)*

The New York Protected Areas Database (NYPAD) is a spatial database of lands protected, designated, or functioning as open space, natural areas, conservation lands, or recreational areas. These lands cover over six million acres—approximately 20% of New York State. Lands in NYPAD may be public or private, open or closed to public use, permanently protected from development or subject to future changes in management. The data in NYPAD can be viewed in the interactive map or downloaded for use with a GIS or other mapping application.

## ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

#### **Adaptation Strategy for Natural Resources**

Potential impacts of climate change on our natural resources include habitat loss, habitat degradation, change in timing of biological functions, and harm to populations of fish and wildlife. State fish and wildlife agencies will be challenged to manage populations and ecosystems in the face of these changes and uncertainties about how ecological systems will adapt. The Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources needs to gather existing data on the baseline condition of habitats and species, population trends, and projects of impacts from climate change to draft adaptation strategies, monitor impacts, and mitigate expected impacts.

NYSDEC, Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4756.  
518-402-8877.

#### **Protecting Our Coastlines**

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

#### **NYS Sea Level Rise Task Force**

[www.dec.ny.gov/energy/45202.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/45202.html)

The NYS Sea Level Rise Task Force was created by the state Legislature in 2007 to assess impacts to the state's coastlines from sea-level rise and to recommend protective and adaptive measures for coastal communities and natural habitats. A report of recommendations was completed in 2010.

climatechange@dec.ny.gov. 518-402-8448

#### **Hudson River Estuary**

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html)

Grants [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html)

The Hudson River Estuary Program leads a unique regional partnership to restore the Hudson in ways that support the quality of life so valued by Hudson River Valley residents. The mission of the program is to conserve the natural resources for which the Hudson is legendary; promote public use and enjoyment of the river; and clean up the pollution that affects our ability to use and enjoy it. *[See USFWS, DEC, TNC & Cornell University's PATHWAY partnership project under Addressing Climate Change – Establishing Riparian Buffers & Wetland Protections– Recommended Actions]*

The Hudson River Estuary Program, NYSDEC Region 3, 21 S Putt Corners Rd, New Paltz, NY 12561. 845-256-3016. [hrep@dec.ny.gov](mailto:hrep@dec.ny.gov)

### **HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY BIODIVERSITY OUTREACH**

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5094.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5094.html)

Since 1996, the DEC Hudson River Estuary Program has focused on the biologically rich uplands of the estuary's watershed. To help combat development sprawl, the Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Project expanded its earlier mission of conducting biological inventories to community outreach in 2001. The Project helps partners identify their biological resources and helps them understand their importance and identify tools and techniques for conservation. Most often information is integrated into an existing local initiative, like a comprehensive plan, open space or watershed plan. The Estuary Biodiversity Project currently has partnerships with more than 70 town governments, land trusts, county agencies and conservation groups. The Estuary Program focuses on the 10 counties that border the Hudson, from Troy to New York City.

The Hudson River Estuary Program, NYSDEC Region 3, 21 S. Putt Corners Rd, New Paltz, NY 12561. 845-256-3016

### **New York Ocean Action Plan**

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/84428.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/84428.html)

The New York Ocean Action Plan (OAP) is a coordinated and inclusive effort focused on improving the health of our ocean ecosystems and their capacity to provide sustainable benefits to New Yorkers. Together, scientists, resource managers, and a wide range of stakeholders will take stock of New York's ocean-related activities and programs. Through a five-year action plan, the goal of the OAP is to achieve better-managed and healthier ocean ecosystems that will benefit people, communities, and the natural world. Grounded in short-term actions to reach long-term goals, the OAP will guide state government funding, research, management, outreach, and education choices.

NYSDEC Bureau of Marine Resources. 631-444-0430. [fwmarine@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fwmarine@dec.ny.gov)

## **NYS DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

### **COASTAL and INLAND WATERWAYS**

[www.dos.ny.gov/opd](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd)

The NYS Department of State (DOS) administers New York State's Coastal and Inland Waterways Program, which was established to conserve and properly use coastal and inland water resources. In 1981, DOS developed a Coastal Management Program and enacted implementing legislation. The program is based on a set of 44 coastal policies that guide management actions at all levels of government in New York and assist in ensuring appropriate use and protection of

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

coasts and waterways. DOS works with federal, state, and local agencies on the following:

- Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs
- Harbor Management Plans
- Inter-Municipal Watershed Management Plans
- Coastal Erosion

NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010.  
Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

### **Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve**

*[www.LISSER.us](http://www.LISSER.us)*

*[www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/LongIslandSSER](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/LongIslandSSER)*

The South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER) and guiding council were established in 1993 by NYS Executive Law to help better protect and manage Long Island's southern bays (Hempstead Bay to Shinnecock Bay) and their watersheds. Administered by DOS, the 2001 SSER Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) focuses on non-point source remediation, water quality monitoring, biological studies, brown tide, habitat restoration and shellfish restoration. DEC and DOS are developing an Ecosystem Based Management Plan for Great South Bay as a pilot project under the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Based Management Initiative.

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office, 250 Veterans Memorial Highway, 2nd Floor, Room 2A15,  
Hauppauge, New York 11788-5519. 516-470-BAYS (2297). [sser@dos.ny.gov](mailto:sser@dos.ny.gov)

## **U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION**

### **Hudson-Raritan Ecosystem Environmental Restoration Program**

[www.nan.usace.army.mil/Media/FactSheets/FactSheetArticleView/tabid/11241/Article/647240/hudson-raritan-estuary-hre-ny-and-nj-ecosystem-restoration-program.aspx](http://www.nan.usace.army.mil/Media/FactSheets/FactSheetArticleView/tabid/11241/Article/647240/hudson-raritan-estuary-hre-ny-and-nj-ecosystem-restoration-program.aspx)

The Hudson-Raritan Estuary of New York and New Jersey is more than 42,000 square kilometers, making it one of the largest estuaries on the East Coast. With more than 20 million residents living nearby, it is also one of the most urbanized, and home to the Port of New York and New Jersey, a major hub of commerce vital to the regional economy. An estuary is defined as an area where fresh water from rivers mixes with the saltwater of the sea. Fresh water is supplied to the Hudson-Raritan Estuary from its major tributaries—the Hudson, Hackensack, Passaic and Raritan rivers, which drain major watersheds of New York and New Jersey. For almost 400 years, the estuary and its watershed have been transformed by industrialization and residential growth, resulting in adverse physical, chemical and biological impacts on both the waters of the estuary and its surrounding land.

In 1999, Congress directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct an estuary-wide environmental restoration study throughout the New York and New Jersey estuary. This study,

known as the Hudson–Raritan Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Study, or simply the HRE Study, is co-sponsored by the Corps and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The goal of the study is to develop a long-term Comprehensive Restoration Plan of environmental improvements that would help restore the ecological value and richness of this nationally important resource.

The Hudson–Raritan Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Project (HREERP) is being carried out under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' General Investigations (GI) Program in coordination with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The goals of the study are to establish, restore, and enhance ecological systems throughout the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary to self-sustainable levels.

### U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS

#### **Peconic Estuary**

*[www.peconicestuary.org](http://www.peconicestuary.org)*

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31842.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31842.html)*

The Peconic Estuary, located on the eastern tip of Long Island, has been designated as an “Estuary of National Significance” under the USEPA National Estuary Program, and the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) was formed to help protect and restore the estuary and its natural resources. The program implements a watershed-based Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Through implementation of the Peconic CCMP, partners work together to carry out several nutrient, pathogen, and toxic management, habitat and living resource, and critical land protection initiatives. The PEP maintains a Critical Land Protection Plan (CLPP) and strategy which prioritizes all available properties in the watershed by assessing their conservation and ecological value.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resource, 205 N Belle Meade Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631-444-0871

#### **New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary**

*[www.harborestuary.org](http://www.harborestuary.org)*

The NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program was established as a National Estuary Program in 1987 as cooperative effort among New York, New Jersey and USEPA to develop and implement a CCMP. The CCMP focuses on efforts to preserve, restore and protect habitat and water quality, promote stewardship and public access, education and involvement, among other priorities. Since the inception of the program, over 97 million dollars have been dedicated for land acquisition and restoration.

NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program, 290 Broadway, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10007-1866, 212-637-3889

### LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY and STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

*www.longislandsoundstudy.net*

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) is a collaborative effort with the States of Connecticut and New York and the EPA to protect and restore the Sound. Through LISS's Stewardship Initiative, 33 areas of exemplary scientific, educational, biological, and/or recreational values were identified along the coastline of Long Island Sound in both NY and CT; 16 of the sites identified were in NY. Projects for developing partnerships with communities and landowners to protect these areas through land acquisitions and other activities have begun. In 2006, Congress passed and signed into law the 2006 Long Island Sound Stewardship Act. Through this act, money can be appropriated to activities that protect these important recreational and ecological areas in Long Island Sound.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N. Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631-444-0467

### **Establishing Riparian Buffers and Wetland Protections**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

##### **TIDAL WETLAND REGULATORY INITIATIVE**

*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4940.html*

Under the Tidal Wetlands Act, Article 25 of the ECL, NYSDEC implements a regulatory program designed to protect and preserve NY's tidal wetlands. Guidance documents are available to assist the public in applying certain regulatory terms.

Marine Habitat Protection, NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631444-0430

##### **FRESHWATER WETLANDS PROTECTION**

*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4937.html*

The policy of New York State as set forth in Title 23, Article 24 of the ECL is to preserve and protect freshwater wetlands. The NYS Freshwater Wetlands Program protects all wetlands 12.4 acres or greater in size, as well as wetlands that are smaller than 12.4 acres but are designated as of Unusual Local Importance. In addition, a 100-foot buffer around each wetland is protected. Wetlands regulated under this program are shown on maps available at DEC offices and local government offices. These maps show the approximate location of regulated wetland boundaries. Final wetland boundaries are determined through an on-site delineation. Any regulated activity to be undertaken in a regulated freshwater wetland requires a permit from DEC. Potential activities in proximity to mapped wetland boundaries should be checked with the appropriate DEC regional office to confirm the activity is outside the regulated wetland. Information on permit requirements for particular wetlands may be obtained at the local DEC regional office.

DEC Regional Offices – See Appendix –  
or

NYSDEC – FWMR, Bureau of Habitat, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4756. 51802-8903

### **TREES FOR TRIBS PROGRAM**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/77710.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/77710.html)*

Modeled after the successful Hudson River Estuary’s “Trees for Tribs” program, New York State’s program engages volunteers in restoring thousands of feet of streamside buffer through tree planting, using native bare-root stock from the state’s Saratoga Tree Nursery. The program provides landowners and local governments with low-cost or no-cost native planting materials and free technical assistance. Coordinating with local, federal and state agencies, Trees for Tribs focuses on comprehensive watershed restoration designed to protect the “green infrastructure”—the first line of defense against storm and flooding events—as well as property, water quality, fish and wildlife. Trees for Tribs promotes best management practices for communities and encourages new programs, policies and investments in tributary protection.

518-402-9405. [treesfortribs@dec.ny.gov](mailto:treesfortribs@dec.ny.gov).

### **OCEAN and GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

*[www.oglecc.ny.gov](http://www.oglecc.ny.gov)*

### **HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html)*

### **LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN PROGRAM**

*[www.lcbp.org](http://www.lcbp.org)*

### **LONG ISLAND SOUND RIPARIAN TOOLBOX**

*[www.hydroqual.com/projects/riparian/index.htm](http://www.hydroqual.com/projects/riparian/index.htm)*

### **NYS GREAT LAKES**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html)*

### **LAKE GEORGE WATERSHED CONFERENCE OFFICE**

c/o Village of Lake George, 26 Old Post Road, Lake George, NY 12845. 518-461-2200.  
[lg2000@nycap.rr.com](mailto:lg2000@nycap.rr.com)

### **Lake George Watershed Coalition**

*[www.lakegeorge2000.org](http://www.lakegeorge2000.org)*



### US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

#### FEDERAL WETLANDS RESERVE

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/wetlands/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/wetlands/)

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program of the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). The program provides financial incentives to private landowners and Native American tribes for restoration and protection of up to 3.04 million acres of wetlands. Technical assistance is also provided to help develop restoration and management plans.

#### Promoting Sustainable Forestry

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

#### Green Certification

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/42947.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/42947.html)

In January 2008, State Forests managed by DEC'S Bureau of State Land Management became "green certified" from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)—two organizations internationally recognized for establishing forest management standards. With this recognition, DEC has demonstrated that the forests under its care are managed to the highest sustainability requirements. More than 780,000 acres have been set aside as State Forests throughout New York. Green certification means that the millions of dollars of forest products harvested annually from these acres are eligible to carry the FSC and SFI labels, which are in increasing demand in the marketplace. Along with growing some of the best timber in New York, DEC foresters continue their long tradition of managing State Forests to benefit everyone in a variety of ways.

NYSDEC, Bureau of State Land Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4255. 518-408-0978

#### Private Forest Management

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4972.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4972.html)

The Forest Stewardship Program authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 encourages the long-term stewardship of non-industrial private forest lands by assisting owners of such lands in more actively managing their forests and related resources by using state, federal and private sector resource management expertise and assistance programs. A cornerstone of the program is the availability of technical assistance to help private forest owners develop a Landowner Forest Stewardship Management Plan. These plans are based upon goals and objectives that individual owners have for their properties. DEC'S Division of Lands and Forests cooperates with the USDA Forest Service to implement New York's Forest Stewardship Program, creating one of the most significant initiatives in providing technical and

educational assistance to over 80,000 private forest owners who collectively control 14.4 million acres of forest lands in our State. To date, Forest Stewardship plans have been developed by foresters and natural resource professionals for more than 2 million acres of privately held lands.

NYSDEC – Bureau of Private Land Services, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4253. 518-402-9425. [flands@dec.ny.gov](mailto:flands@dec.ny.gov)

### Promoting Urban Forestry and Green Infrastructure

#### NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

Search “green infrastructure” for various programs that use green infrastructure.

#### URBAN and COMMUNITY FORESTRY and COST-SHARE GRANTS

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4957.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4957.html)

DEC's Urban and Community Forestry Program (U&CF Program) provides the leadership, in cooperation with states, for improving and expanding urban forest ecosystems in the nation's 45,000 towns and cities where 80% of the population of our country resides. The program provides leadership for state-of-the-art technology and makes grants to urban areas to improve their quality of life through tree planting, maintenance and urban tree protection actions.

NYSDEC – Bureau of Private Land Services, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4253. 518-402-9425

#### NYS URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL

[nysufc.org](http://nysufc.org)

The New York State Urban Forestry Council is an organized volunteer group. Its major funding is supplied through the USDA Forest Service and supplemented by membership dues and independent contributions. [treeinfo@nysurbanforestrycouncil.com](mailto:treeinfo@nysurbanforestrycouncil.com)

#### NYS ENERGY RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (NYSERDA)

[www.nyserda.ny.gov](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov)

#### Columbia University Urban Heat Island Resources

[ccir.ciesin.columbia.edu/nyc/links\\_impacts\\_heat.html](http://ccir.ciesin.columbia.edu/nyc/links_impacts_heat.html)

#### US Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure](http://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure)

## ENSURING CLEAN WATER, AIR AND LAND FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

GREENING NEW YORK'S ECONOMY  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE  
Providing Watershed and Water Quality Protections

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

#### **Watersheds and Watershed Management**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/26561.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/26561.html)*

We all live in a watershed, and our actions affect others in the watershed. Because of this, a watershed approach to planning and management is an important part of water protection and restoration efforts. A watershed approach is defined hydrologically instead of politically. It acknowledges that everyone's actions in a watershed have an effect on others; recognizes that upstream conditions affect downstream water quality; and creates more effective solutions because whole watersheds and many stakeholders are included.

#### **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8468.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8468.html)*

Stormwater management focuses on controlling the flow of water from rain or melting snow from rooftops, paved areas, sloped lawns and bare soil into rivers and streams. Left unchecked, such runoff transports a variety of substances—soil, animal waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizers, oil and grease, debris and other potential pollutants—to streams and lakes, where their impacts reduce fish and aquatic life, threaten drinking water supplies and discourage recreational use. USEPA estimates that urban/suburban and construction sources of stormwater runoff contribute to half of all impaired waterways. Stormwater permits, which rely on a wide range of practices to reduce and control stormwater runoff, are the cornerstone of the DEC stormwater management program.

NYSDEC Division of Water, Bureau of Water Permits, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233. 518-402-8111. [dowinfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:dowinfo@dec.ny.gov)

#### **WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/4774.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/4774.html)*

Under the Environmental Protection Fund, New Yorkers have worked together to restore, preserve and protect our state's valuable environmental resources by funding Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP). DEC periodically issues a call for projects, evaluates applications, and ranks projects for funding under the WQIP process. Funds are used for projects that demonstrate direct environmental benefits that will help reduce polluted runoff, improve water

quality, and restore habitat in New York State waters.

NYSDEC Division of Water, Bureau of Program Services, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233. 518 – 402–8267. [dowinfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:dowinfo@dec.ny.gov)

### **Water Quality Programs**

[www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/290.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/290.html)

New York's abundant rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters are used for recreation, fishing, tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. Though plentiful, the water resources of the state are threatened by chemical contaminants and other pollutants from a wide range of sources. DEC provides various programs that track the quality of the waters, identify and investigate sources of pollution, control these sources and develop strategies to address water quality threats.

NYSDEC Division of Water, Bureau of Water Permits, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233. 518–402–8233. [dowinfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:dowinfo@dec.ny.gov)

### **HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY**

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html)

Grants [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html)

Hudson River Estuary Program, NYSDEC Region 3, 21 S Putt Corners Rd, New Paltz, NY 12561. 845–256–3016

### **NYS GREAT LAKES**

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html)

## **US Environmental Protection Agency**

### **PECONIC ESTUARY**

[www.peconicestuary.org](http://www.peconicestuary.org)

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31842.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31842.html)

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resource, 205 N. Belle Meade Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733–3456. 631–444–0871

### **NY/NJ HARBOR and ESTUARY PROGRAM**

[www.harborestuary.org](http://www.harborestuary.org)

NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program, 290 Broadway, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10007–1866. 212–637–3889. [info@harborestuary.org](mailto:info@harborestuary.org)

### **LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY**

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

*www.longislandsoundstudy.net*  
*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31851.html*

NYSDEC – Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N. Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631-444-0467

### **LONG ISLAND SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE**

*www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31847.html*

250 Veterans Memorial Highway, 2nd Floor, Hauppauge, New York 11788. 516-470-BAYS.  
saser@dos.ny.gov

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE and MARKETS**

### **AGRICULTURAL NON-POINT SOURCE ABATEMENT and CONTROL**

Our State's Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Grant Program (Ag NPS Grant Program), administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) in conjunction with DEC, is a competitive program that assists farmers in abating and preventing water pollution from agricultural activities by providing technical assistance and financial incentives. County Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are the only entity eligible to apply for Ag NPS Grant Program Funds.

NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, 10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235. 518-457-2713

## **LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN PROGRAM**

*www.lcbp.org*

## **NEW YORK OCEAN and GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

*www.oglecc.ny.gov*

The New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council, created by state law, is charged with defining and implementing an adaptive, ecosystem-based management approach to improve the health of coastal ecosystems. It consists of nine member agencies with responsibility for managing a broad range of human activities that impact ecosystem health. The Council's main activities include integrating ecosystem-based management principles into agency programs and building management tools and the capacity to use them among agencies, stakeholders and other parties.

New York Ocean & Great Lakes, Ecosystem Conservation Council, 99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12231. 518-474-6000

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

**COASTAL NON-POINT POLLUTION CONTROL**

*[www.dos.ny.gov/opd](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd)*

NY's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (CNPCP) unites DEC's water quality management expertise with DOS's coastal land use management expertise in addressing non-point pollution from a broad array of sources that impact or may impact coastal water quality. The contribution of open space to controlling non-point source pollution is recognized in this program.

**INTERMUNICIPAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT**

*[www.dos.ny.gov/opd](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd)*

Municipalities may apply for funding under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to prepare intermunicipal watershed management plans to control non-point pollution and foster appropriate development and open space protection in a watershed. Implementation grants are available to municipalities under the Environmental Protection Fund.

NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010, Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

- See **Protecting Our Coastlines** for additional program information. -

**Community Greening for Environmental Justice**

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html)*

Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Efforts are focused on improving the environment in communities, specifically minority and low-income communities, and addressing disproportionate adverse environmental impacts that may exist in those communities.

NYSDEC, Office of Environmental Justice, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-1500. 518-402-8556

**Health Benefits of Open Space**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html)*

**Building Urban Farms and Community Gardens**

**Regional Community Gardening Resources**

Capital District (Albany, Troy and Schenectady)

Capital Roots (formerly Capital District Community Gardens)

[www.capitalroots.org](http://www.capitalroots.org)

518-274-8685. [info@cdcg.org](mailto:info@cdcg.org)

Binghamton – Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments (VINES)

[vinesgardens.org](http://vinesgardens.org)

607-205-8108

Buffalo – Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo

[www.grassrootsgardens.org](http://www.grassrootsgardens.org)

716-851-4647. [grgbuffalo@hotmail.com](mailto:grgbuffalo@hotmail.com)

Ithaca – Project Growing Hope

[ithacacommunitygardens.org](http://ithacacommunitygardens.org)

PO Box 606, Ithaca, NY 14851. 607-216-8770

New York City – Green Thumb

City of New York Parks and Recreation

[www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org)

212-788-8070

NYC Community Gardens Coalition

[www.nyccgc.org](http://www.nyccgc.org)

347-699-6099

Rochester – City of Rochester Gardening and Horticulture Programs

[www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589947712](http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589947712)

Rochester – Rochester Roots

[www.rochesterroots.org](http://www.rochesterroots.org)

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

Yonkers – Greyston Community Gardens Program  
[www.greyston.org](http://www.greyston.org)

914-376-3900

### General Resources

American Community Gardening Association  
[www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
[www.cce.cornell.edu/learnAbout/Pages/Local\\_Offices.aspx](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/learnAbout/Pages/Local_Offices.aspx)

Cornell Cooperative Extension Gardening Portal  
[gardening.cce.cornell.edu/](http://gardening.cce.cornell.edu/)

National Gardening Association  
[www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
[www.agriculture.ny.gov/cg/cggardens.html](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/cg/cggardens.html)

### ***OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION and HISTORIC PRESERVATION***

#### **COMMUNITY PARKS**

[nysparks.com/grants/grant-programs.aspx](http://nysparks.com/grants/grant-programs.aspx)

Municipalities or not-for-profit entities can apply for matching funds to acquire or preserve, rehabilitate or restore land for community gardening purposes.

NYS OPRHP, 625 Broadway, Albany NY, 12238. 518-474-0456

### ***DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION***

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANTS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/public/31226.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/31226.html)

Community gardening organizations are eligible to apply for grants to fund projects that address environmental and related public health issues. Projects must address multiple harms and risks to communities and communicate project results to community residents.

NYSDEC, Office of Environmental Justice, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-1500. 518-402-8556



**Promoting Smart Growth and Improving our Transportation Uses**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

**SMART GROWTH IN THE ADIRONDACK AND CATSKILL PARKS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/45970.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/45970.html)*

In 2008, the Governor's Smart Growth Cabinet along with the partnerships with state agencies and the private sector began promoting and implementing smart growth principles. The promotion of park-wide planning and hamlet revitalization in the Adirondacks and development and implementation of capital projects in the Catskills have been proposed by eligible local municipal applicants. DEC has initiated EPF funding toward awarded proposed projects submitted by towns, villages and not-for-profit organization partners located in the Adirondack and Catskill parks. This funding is intended to help park communities capitalize on the historic and cultural assets of existing settlements to cultivate economic growth within the framework of highly protected forest preserve lands.

NYSDEC, Division of Lands and Forests, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4250. 518-402-9405.

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

*[www.nysdot.gov](http://www.nysdot.gov)*

*[www.dot.ny.gov/programs/smart-planning](http://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/smart-planning)*

The New York State Department of Transportation's (DOT) purpose is to enrich the state's many communities by investing in transportation improvements that promote sustainable economic growth and contribute to their overall quality of life. These objectives are pursued through a statewide program integrating land-use and transportation planning, including the provision of training, educational materials and hands-on planning assistance.

DOT maintains a website that provides direct links to its activities and programs relating to transportation and land-use in our communities; to planning tools and information they and other organizations provide; and to potential sources of funding.

NYS DOT, 50 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12232. 518-457-6195

**TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS**

*[www.dot.ny.gov/programs/tep](http://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/tep)*

The Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP) is a federal reimbursement program administered by DOT. Recognizing that transportation systems are influenced and impacted by more than the condition of the traditional highway and bridge infrastructure, the program enables funding for transportation projects of cultural, aesthetic, historic and environmental significance.

### **BICYCLES and PEDESTRIANS**

*[www.dot.ny.gov/bicycle](http://www.dot.ny.gov/bicycle)*

DOT maintains a system of three signed, long-distance, on-road bicycle routes for experienced cyclists—State Routes 5, 9 and 17. In addition, New York has a system of bicycle routes for both short and long trips. DOT is constantly working to improve accessibility.

### **SCENIC BYWAYS**

*[www.dot.ny.gov/display/programs/scenic-byways](http://www.dot.ny.gov/display/programs/scenic-byways)*

The New York State Scenic Byways Program was created in 1992 by the State Legislature. The program encourages both economic development and resource conservation, recognizing that each of these aspects of a byway must be fostered and sustained to ensure the success of the other. The program is administered by DOT and is guided and implemented by the NYS Scenic Byways Advisory Board. Various state agencies are represented on the Board, as are private organizations with specific interests: tourism, the motoring public, resource management, and preservation of scenic quality.

[SmartPlanning@dot.state.ny.us](mailto:SmartPlanning@dot.state.ny.us)

## **PROTECTING, UTILIZING AND CONSERVING OUR STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Supporting Our Working Farms and Forests

### **OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE**

*[www.osiny.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Issues\\_Farms](http://www.osiny.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Issues_Farms)*

### **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE and MARKETS**

#### **FARMLAND PROTECTION**

*[www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/farmprotect.html](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/farmprotect.html)*

The State, through the Department of Agriculture and Markets, has provided matching funds for the development and implementation of local farmland protection efforts, including a purchase of development rights (PDR) program described elsewhere in this Plan. A PDR is a form of easement that restricts the use of lands under easement. State assistance payments are available to counties or municipalities to cover up to 75% of the total costs for implementation activities to protect viable farmland. These grants are awarded pursuant to a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP contains eligibility guidelines and criteria by which all projects are scored and ranked for funding.

NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, 10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235. 518-457-3880.

### **USDA Farm SERVICE AGENCY CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM**

*[www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index)*

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with federal, state, and tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES**

*[www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip)*

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program was reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality, forestry management and energy conservation as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants in installing or implementing structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practices and a maximum term of ten years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost-shares to implement conservation practices. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the program.

The program's activities are carried out according to an environmental quality incentives program plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns. The practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions. The local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) approves the plan.

EQIP may cost-share up to 50 or 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices. Incentive payments may be provided to encourage producers to carry out management practices for three years, and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers may be eligible for cost-shares up to 90 percent. It further allows these individuals to receive in advance up to 30% of the amount needed for purchasing materials, or contracting farmers and ranchers may elect to use a certified third-party provider for technical assistance.

An individual or entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, cost-share or incentive payments that, in the aggregate, exceed \$300,000 for all program contracts entered during the term of the Farm Bill. A cap of \$450,000 is set for projects of special environmental significance.

EQIP projects have been implemented throughout our state since its inception in 1997. Since the authorization of the 2002 Farm Bill, New York has written approximately 960 contracts. About 11

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

million federal dollars came into the state through this program in 2006.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 441 South Salina Street, Suite 354, Syracuse, New York 13202-2450. 315-477-6504

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

#### SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41156.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41156.html)

A workable conservation easement program must be flexible and preclude land-use changes while providing for the continuation of forest management and timber harvesting capability on forests in private ownership. Our state would acquire development rights with or without recreation rights, depending on the landowner's needs and interests and the public interests identified. Such a program is authorized through the Environmental Protection Fund and the Forest Legacy Program.

NYSDEC, Division of Lands & Forests, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4250. 518-402-9405

#### PRIVATE FOREST LAND UNDER SECTIONS 480 & 480-a

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5236.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5236.html)

Section 480-a of the Real Property Tax Law was developed to provide forest owners with an incentive to retain and manage forest land. Owners of qualifying woodland can apply for a partial property tax exemption of up to 80% by committing their forest land to an approved forest management plan. The original Forest Tax Law, RPTL Section 480, provides for a freeze of property value assessment but does not require a management plan. It is no longer open to new registrants.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Private Land Services, 625 Broadway, Albany, New York 12233-4253. 518-402-9425

#### COOPERATING FORESTER

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5230.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5230.html)

DEC's Cooperating Forester program is designed to encourage landowners to work with private foresters in managing their woodlots. Increasing contact between landowners and professional foresters will promote wise stewardship of forest land in New York. Since the results of forest management decisions can be both long lasting and hard to reverse, it is important to make these decisions carefully and intelligently. Cooperating foresters can provide valuable information and advice critical for landowners to make long-range or large-scale land management decisions. In many cases, however, the professional assistance a landowner receives from a forester will pay for itself by increasing financial returns and other benefits from the woodlot.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Private Land Services, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4253. 518-402-9425

### **FOREST STEWARDSHIP**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/45934.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/45934.html)*

NYSDEC's Division of Lands and Forests cooperates with the USDA Forest Service to implement the Forest Stewardship Program. This program is authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. Technical and educational assistance is provided to help private forest owners develop and implement Forest Stewardship Management plans by guiding them in the use and management of their forest lands and associated resources.

NYSDEC– Bureau of Private Land Services, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233–4253. 518–402–9425

### **FOREST LEGACY**

NYSDEC *[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/63117.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/63117.html)*

USDA Forest Service *[www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml)*

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP), administered by the US Forest Service in partnership with states, is a voluntary land conservation program that provides financial assistance to states to prevent forest fragmentation and enhance conservation of forest lands. The FLP has ensured that important forests remain intact and continue to contribute to the community, local economy, landowners and the environment. FLP re-authorization is necessary as pressure to develop forest lands continues to increase.

### **COMMUNITY FOREST and OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION**

Provides federal matching grants, up to 50%, to help county or local governments, Native American tribes, or non-profit organizations acquire private forests that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and are economically, environmentally and culturally important to communities.

Community forests will be managed as “working forests” to generate economic benefits and provide jobs and economic stability to communities.

NYSDEC – Division of Lands and Forests, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233–4250. 518–402–9405

### **MASTER FOREST OWNER**

*[blogs.cornell.edu/ccemfo](http://blogs.cornell.edu/ccemfo)*

The Master Forest Owner program is implemented by Cornell Cooperative Extension and provides basic forestry information to landowners who then act as mentors to their neighbors, promoting appreciation of natural resources and wise stewardship of forest lands and related resources.

Master Forest Owner Office, 108 Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. 607–255–2115.  
dlt5@cornell.edu

**Stewarding Our Unique, Natural and Wildlife Habitats**

**OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**STATE PARK BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS**

*[nysparks.com/environment/bird-conservation-areas.aspx](http://nysparks.com/environment/bird-conservation-areas.aspx)*

**AUDUBON IN THE PARKS**

*[nysparks.com/environment/audubon-in-the-parks.aspx](http://nysparks.com/environment/audubon-in-the-parks.aspx)*

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

**ADIRONDACK and CATSKILL FOREST PRESERVE**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4960.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4960.html)*

The Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve consists of lands owned by New York State within the Adirondack and Catskill regions under the management of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Division of Lands and Forests. Forest Preserve lands are protected as "forever wild" by Article XIV, Section 1 of the State Constitution. Forest Preserve lands are acquired for the preservation of open space and for public recreation. In the Adirondack Park, there are 2,700,000 acres of Forest Preserve. The Catskill Park contains 281,000 acres of Forest Preserve lands.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Forest Preserve Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4254. 518-473-9518

**FOREST PRESERVE EXPANSION FUND**

An amendment to Article 14, Section 3 of the New York State Constitution, effective January 1, 1974, allows the State to sell isolated parcels of Forest Preserve land that lie outside the Adirondack and Catskill parks' boundaries, providing they are 100 acres or less in size and that revenues obtained from such sales will be used to purchase Forest Preserve land within the two parks.

Bureau of Forest Preserve Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4254. 518-473-9518

**STATE FORESTS**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/40672.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/40672.html)*

State Forests are lands owned by New York State under the management of DEC'S Division of Lands and Forests, Bureau of State Land Management. These lands are acquired pursuant to Title 5 of Article 9 of the ECL for open space and watershed protection, timber production and recreation. There are 776,000 acres of State Forests across New York State.

NYSDEC, Bureau of State Land Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4255. 518-402-9428

### UNIQUE AREAS

Unique areas are part of a state project to acquire lands of special natural beauty, wilderness character, geological, ecological or historical significance for the state nature and historical preserve and similar lands within a forest preserve county outside the Adirondack and Catskill parks. Funds are received by the state from the 1972 Environmental Quality Bond Act for unique area preservation projects. Unique area preservation projects outside forest preserve counties shall be undertaken only upon the recommendation of the state nature and historical preserve trust and shall be recommended by the commissioner for inclusion in the state nature and historical preserve.

NYSDEC, Bureau of State Land Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4255. 518-408-9428

### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html)

Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are lands owned by New York State under the management of DEC's Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources (DFWMR). These lands have been acquired for the conservation of wildlife and for public use, including hunting, trapping and fishing. There are 104 wildlife management areas across New York State, totaling 190,000 acres.

NYSDEC - DFWMR, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4755. 518-402-8924

### DEC BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS

[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30935.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30935.html)

The DEC Bird Conservation Area (BCA) program, modeled after the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Areas Program, seeks to provide a comprehensive, ecosystem approach to conserving birds and their habitats on state lands and waters, by integrating bird conservation interests in agency planning, management, and research projects, within the context of agency missions. Subsequent to passage of the BCA program, the legislature also authorized the State Natural Heritage Areas program to designate Natural Heritage sites on state-owned lands. To date, 50 BCAs have been designated.

NYSDEC-DFWMR, Nongame and Habitat Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. 518-402-8924

### NEW YORK NATURAL HERITAGE

[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/29338.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/29338.html)

The NY Natural Heritage Program is a partnership between DEC and The Nature Conservancy. Our mission is to facilitate conservation of rare animals, rare plants, and significant natural communities, such as unique forest types, wetlands, grasslands, etc. This mission is accomplished by combining thorough field inventories, scientific analyses, expert interpretation, and the most comprehensive database on New York's distinctive biodiversity to deliver the highest quality information for natural resource planning, protection, and management. NY Natural Heritage was established in 1985 and is a contract unit within DEC's Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources. The program is staffed by

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

more than 25 scientists and specialists with expertise in ecology, zoology, botany, information management, environmental review, and geographic information systems.

NYSDEC–DFWMR, NY Natural Heritage Program, 625 Broadway, 5th Floor, Albany, NY 12233–4757.  
518–402–8935

### STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS

*[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7179.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7179.html)*

In fall 2001, federal legislation and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) established the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program. The program provides funds from offshore oil and gas leasing to state wildlife agencies for conservation of fish and wildlife species in greatest need of conservation and their associated habitats. The program is implemented with funding provided as a direct result of “Teaming with Wildlife” efforts sustained for more than a decade by fish and wildlife conservation interests across the country. The SWG program is unique in that it provides funds for species not traditionally hunted or fished. The USFWS apportions the funds to states via a formula based on land area and population size.

NYSDEC – DFWMR, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233–4753. 518–402–8920. [swgidea@dec.ny.gov](mailto:swgidea@dec.ny.gov)

### INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Main DEC Invasive Species webpage *[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/265.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/265.html)*

Invasive Species Council *[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6989.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6989.html)*

Invasive species are non–native species that can harm the environment or human health. As a threat to our biodiversity, they have been judged second only to habitat loss. They come from all around the world, with the rate of invasion increasing along with the increase in international trade accompanying globalization. It is a concern that has plagued our past native ecosystems and is expected to do so into our future. In response, a statewide comprehensive strategic plan was released by the Invasive Species Task Force in 2005. It began to establish a uniform method for how the state will need to begin addressing this problem through prevention, early detection, rapid response, control management, and education. Since then, additional response plans have been developed from this strategy to address the unique measures needed to be taken for specific types of infestations.

NYSDEC, Division of Lands and Forests, Invasive Species Coordination Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233–4250. 518–402–9405

### NEW YORK INVASIVE SPECIES INFORMATION

The New York Invasive Species Clearinghouse

*[nyis.info](http://nyis.info)*



### **INVASIVE PLANT COUNCIL OF NEW YORK STATE**

*[www.ipcnys.org](http://www.ipcnys.org)*

195 New Karner Road, Suite 200, Albany, NY 12205. 518-690-7871

### **NYS LANDOWNER INCENTIVES**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/32722.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/32722.html)*

The Landowner Incentive Program, partially funded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, is New York's premier program for the protection of at-risk species habitat on private lands.

### **Grassland Protection and Management**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/32891.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/32891.html)*

Through the Landowner Incentive Program for Grassland Protection and Management, private landowners can participate in the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of grassland habitats. Agricultural grasslands are among the most important and imperiled habitats across our state. They need to be regularly managed to remain suitable for grassland birds. Because virtually all of the grasslands in our state are agricultural fields under private ownership and control, it would be impossible to protect these habitats and the species they comprise without the voluntary assistance of private landowners.

Since 2006, private landowners have been able to apply for technical and financial assistance to benefit this critical habitat and the species that depend on it. In partnership, DEC and Audubon NY reviewed and prepared a detailed site management plan. To maximize the program's effectiveness, key grassland focus areas have been delineated based on the birds that breed there. To date, nearly 2,000 acres of high-quality grasslands have been enrolled in five-year contracts for protection and management. Landowners must refrain from mowing during the nesting season and must mow part of their fields and remove shrubs and trees in the fall in compliance with their site management plans. This management regime allows for birds to nest undisturbed and mimics a natural mosaic of vegetation height and density. Landowners are free to sell and use most of the hay that they harvest. In return, they receive a yearly rental payment to offset lost revenue from hay or crop sales. Everyone wins—birds are able to reproduce and prosper, landowners are compensated for their labor and efforts, and the land is kept as open space working grassland.

### **Management and Protection of Bog Turtle Habitat**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/48707.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/48707.html)*

The Landowner Incentive Program is also involving private landowners in the conservation of unique critical wildlife habitat. The LIP for Management and Protection of Bog Turtle Habitat addresses the need to protect and manage habitat for this endangered species. Most bog turtle habitat occurs on private land and relies on the voluntary protection and management of landowners. Through this program, landowners and not-for-profits will be able to participate in habitat conservation, receiving funding to address invasive species, hydrological changes, habitat fragmentation, and other threats to the species and its habitat.

### **Gating of Indiana Bat Hibernacula**

[www.dec.ny.gov/animals/32722.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/32722.html)

Since 2005, the Landowner Incentive Program has been protecting bat hibernacula on private lands through the gating of cave entrances, which helps prevent disturbances to overwintering bats. One of the properties protected has historically protected over 200,000 bats. Typically, DEC establishes Cooperative Agreements with landowners to perform the required work. Eligibility is limited to landowners having large caves or underground mines which serve as bat wintering areas.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. 518-402-8924

### **WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES**

[www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs](http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs)

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/whip](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/whip)

The USDA Forest Service's Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) provides technical assistance and cost-sharing to private agricultural and non-industrial forest landowners as well as to tribal landowner to help them enhance wildlife habitat areas on their lands. Each year \$85 million will be available through 2012. Contracts are generally 5 - 10 years long. WHIP complements other cost-share/incentive programs and provides a mechanism capable of overcoming major obstacles to increasing wildlife habitat area by: 1) compensating landowners for the lack of market incentive to invest in public goods; and 2) encouraging landowners to make long-term investments in maintaining the natural resource base.

NYSDEC, Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4755. 518-402-8924

### **GRASSLAND RESERVE**

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/grassland](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/grassland)

[www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=grp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=grp)

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property through long-term rental agreements or easements. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Forest Service are coordinating implementation of the GRP, which helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and prairie lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands. An additional 1.22 million acres have been authorized for enrollment in 2009-2012. Tracts must be at least 40 contiguous acres to qualify. Landowners can receive up to 50% cost-sharing on restoration of grasslands.

### **HABITAT/ACCESS STAMPS**

[www.dec.ny.gov/permits/329.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/329.html)

The Habitat/Access Stamp is available to people who want to support DEC's efforts to conserve habitat and increase public access for fish and wildlife-related recreation. The 2008-2009 stamp may be

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

purchased for a \$5.00 donation at license-issuing outlets and online, beginning August 18, 2008. All monies raised through purchases of the Habitat/Access Stamp are deposited in the state's Conservation Fund in the Habitat Account. Habitat/Access grants are awarded annually to fund projects that improve fish and wildlife habitat and public access for hunting, fishing, trapping and other fish and wildlife-related recreation.

NYSDEC DFWMR, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4750. 518-402-8845

### CONSERVE HABITAT LICENSE PLATES

*[dmv.ny.gov/custom-plates/causes](http://dmv.ny.gov/custom-plates/causes)*

Sales from the "Conserve Habitat" custom license plate program are dedicated to improve habitat and to increase habitat access throughout the state. Revenues are deposited in a special account within the Conservation Fund and overseen by DEC. The habitat account is used solely to protect, restore, and manage habitat, and to develop public access for fish and wildlife-related recreation and study.

### CONSERVE OPEN SPACE LICENSE PLATE PROGRAM

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5067.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5067.html)*

*[www.dmv.ny.gov/cause.htm](http://www.dmv.ny.gov/cause.htm)*

Roger Tory Peterson, the foremost naturalist of the 20th century, graciously donated a bluebird painting, which was used as the basis of New York's beautiful bluebird license plate. Anyone concerned about open space conservation should consider purchasing the bluebird plate.

### MINED LAND RECLAMATION

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5020.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5020.html)*

The NYS Mined Land Reclamation Law requires that sound environmental principles be applied to reclaimed areas affected by minerals development to a condition that allows productive use of the land. Regulated mining operations have an approved mining plan that specifies how mining will take place and an approved reclamation plan that provides for the land to be returned to productive use. Financial security submitted by the mining permit applicant ensures that the land will be reclaimed. Since the state Mined Land Reclamation Law was enacted in 1975, more than 2,500 mines have been reclaimed, most of these by the mine operators. In the small number of cases where the operators have defaulted on their obligation to reclaim, DEC has seized the financial security and used it to carry out the reclamation. Today, sites in New York State that were once mined are used as farms, wetlands, wildlife habitats, residential developments and public recreation areas. In addition, DEC's Division of Mineral Resources, along with the NYS Geological Survey, provides assistance to municipalities with their efforts to define and protect mineral resource aggregate areas within their jurisdictions.

NYSDEC, Division of Mineral Resources, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-5600. 518-402-8072.  
[dmninfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:dmninfo@dec.ny.gov)

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

### **ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY**

*apa.ny.gov*

The Adirondack Park was created in 1892 by the State of New York amid concerns for the water and timber resources of the region. Today the Park is the largest publicly protected area in the contiguous United States, greater in size than Yellowstone, Everglades, Glacier, and Grand Canyon National Park combined. The boundary of the Park encompasses approximately 6 million acres, nearly half of which belong to all the people of New York State and are constitutionally protected to remain “forever wild” forest preserve. The remaining half of the Park is private land, which includes settlements, farms, timberlands, businesses, homes, and camps.

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) was created in 1971 by the New York State Legislature to develop long-range land-use plans for both public and private lands within the boundary of the Park. The APA is a New York State governmental agency with an 11-member board and a staff of 60 people. The Agency Board meets monthly to act on Park policy issues and permit applications. Agency Board meetings take place the second Thursday and Friday of each month and are open to the public.

NYS Adirondack Park Agency, P.O. Box 99, 1133 NYS Route 86, Ray Brook, NY 12977. 518-891-4050

### **FISH and MARINE RESOURCES**

#### **NEW YORK OCEAN and GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

*www.oglecc.ny.gov*

New York State has a strong foundation of planning, regulatory and technological tools to manage the state's fisheries and marine resources. The Ecosystem Conservation Council is working to manage ecosystem impacts, promote habitat protection and restoration, and achieve a sustainable fishery with participation by both the commercial and recreational fishing industries and the improvement of data collection efforts.

New York Ocean and Great Lakes, Ecosystem Conservation Council, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010, Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

#### **NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY HARBOR ESTUARY**

*www.harborestuary.org*

NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program, 290 Broadway, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10007-1866. 212-637-3889

#### **LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN**

*www.lcbp.org*

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

#### PECONIC ESTUARY

[www.peconicestuary.org](http://www.peconicestuary.org)

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resource, 205 N Belle Meade Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456.  
631-444-0871

#### LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY

[www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net)

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31851.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/31851.html)

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N. Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631-444-0467.

#### NYS GREAT LAKES

[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html)

#### WILD, SCENIC and RECREATIONAL RIVERS

[www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6033.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6033.html)

[www.dec.ny.gov/permits/32739.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/32739.html)

The Wild Scenic and Recreational River System Act establishes a means of providing protection for three major classifications of river corridors, from development through land-use controls. Rivers are added to the system by legislative enactment. Regulated corridors are administered by DEC, except for private lands within the Adirondack Park where the Adirondack Park Agency has administrative responsibility. The three river classifications are: Wild, Scenic and Recreational, with Wild having the most restrictive limitations and Recreational having the least.

#### PROTECTION OF WATERS

[www.dec.ny.gov/regs/2485.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/regs/2485.html)

NYSDEC, Bureau of Water Assessment and Management, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-3502.  
518-402-8180

#### FRESHWATER WETLANDS PROTECTION

Mapping [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5124.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5124.html)

Contacts [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5138.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5138.html)

DEC Regional Offices [www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html)

NYSDEC Bureau of Habitat, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4756. 51802-8848

### **TIDAL WETLAND LAND-USE REGULATION**

*[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4940.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4940.html)*

NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631-444-0430.

### **EASTERN BROOK TROUT JOINT VENTURE**

*[www.easternbrooktrout.org](http://www.easternbrooktrout.org)*

Brook trout are an important recreational and cultural species, regional icon, and indicator of high water quality. However, brook trout populations are declining across their historic eastern United States range. In New York, only 5% of watersheds that contained brook trout in streams and rivers remain intact. Brook trout have been lost from almost all of the large lakes in the Adirondacks that historically supported populations of the species, leaving them to survive in a small percentage of smaller lakes and ponds.

The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) was formed in 2004 to address regional and range-wide threats to brook trout. It comprises fish and wildlife agencies from 17 states and a number of federal agencies, conservation organizations, and academic institutions. The EBTJV has completed a detailed, sub-watershed scale assessment of brook trout status and threats throughout its eastern range. Based on this assessment, a range-wide conservation strategy was prepared that lays out specific goals, objectives, and target dates for brook trout protection and restoration.

For New York State, top priorities include the protection of intact brook trout populations through land acquisition, easements, or other methods to ensure the perpetuation of healthy brook trout populations into the future. These opportunities should be identified through the open space planning process.

NYSDEC - DFWMR, Cold Water Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, New York 12233-4756  
518-402-8959.

### **NYS SEAGRASS TASK FORCE**

*[www.seagrassli.org/conservation/managers/seagrass\\_taskforce.html](http://www.seagrassli.org/conservation/managers/seagrass_taskforce.html)*

Chapter 404 of the Laws of 2006 established a Seagrass Task Force within DEC's Bureau of Marine Resources, acknowledging the importance of seagrasses and seagrass habitat in NY's waters and the necessity for protecting and restoring this valuable natural resource. The Task Force is charged with developing management, research, monitoring and regulatory recommendations for New York's Governor and state officials by December 31, 2009.

Marine Habitat Protection, NYSDEC, Bureau of Marine Resources, 205 N Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733-3456. 631-444-0430

### **ATLANTIC COASTAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP**

*[www.atlanticfishhabitat.org](http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org)*

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership is a coast-wide collaborative effort to accelerate the conservation of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes. The Partnership consists of resource managers, scientists and professionals representing 30 different state, federal, tribal, non-governmental and other entities. It works in areas stretching from Maine to the Florida Keys, and from the headwaters of coastally draining rivers to the edge of the continental shelf, with a focus on estuarine environments.

### **DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

#### **SIGNIFICANT COASTAL HABITATS**

*[www.dos.ny.gov/opd](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd)*

Many habitats vital to the survival of New York's coastal fish and wildlife resources exist along the state's 3,200 mile shoreline. To protect these important natural areas, DOS, in cooperation with DEC, has designated 250 Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats (SCFWHs) across the State. This designation is designed to protect and offer guidance on management activities for habitats that have important natural resource values, including recreational fishing and other passive natural resource-related activities.

NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010, Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

See **Protecting Our Coastlines & Establishing Riparian Buffers & Wetland Protections** for additional program information.

### **Preserving Our Scenic, Historic & Cultural Heritage**

#### **OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION and HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

##### **STATE HERITAGE AREAS PROGRAM**

*[nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-areas.aspx](http://nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-areas.aspx)*

The New York State Heritage Areas Program fosters unique working partnerships between the State and local governments and the private sector for the preservation, economic development, recreational and educational use of natural and cultural resources of statewide significance. This program and model planning process has received national recognition and deserves continued inter-governmental support. Over 25 years after development of the Urban Cultural Park system, 18 active Heritage Areas encompass more than 400 municipalities. The system remains the oldest and one of the largest statewide heritage systems in the country.

##### **NEW YORK STATE HERITAGE TRAILS PROGRAM**

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

*nysparks.com/historic-preservation/heritage-trails*

The NYS Heritage Commission administers the New York State Heritage Trails Program. The program administers a series of thematic trails which will link historical sites together, bringing history to life and giving New Yorkers and visitors an opportunity to learn about and discover our state's rich heritage.

### **NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST PROGRAM GIFTS and DONATIONS**

*nysparks.com/natural-heritage-trust/default.aspx*

The Natural Heritage Trust is a public benefit corporation of our state that can accept private sector gifts and funds for the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the natural and historic resources for parks, recreation and historic preservation purposes. This provides an opportunity for OPRHP and DEC to promote public/private cooperation.

### **NYS HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

*nysparks.com/shpo*

New York's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) helps communities identify, evaluate, preserve, and revitalize their historic, archeological, and cultural resources. The SHPO administers programs authorized by both the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980. These programs, including the Statewide Historic Resources Survey, the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit, the Certified Local Government program, the state historic preservation grants program, state and federal environmental review, and a wide range of technical assistance, are provided through a network of teams assigned to territories across the state. The SHPO works with governments, the public, and educational and not-for-profit organizations to raise historic preservation awareness, to instill in New Yorkers a sense of pride in the state's unique history and to encourage heritage tourism and community revitalization

New York State Division for Historic Preservation, Peebles Island State Park, P.O. Box 189, Waterford, NY 12188-0189. 518-237-8643

### **OPRHP DATA SETS**

*data.ny.gov*

- National Register of Historic Places
- Campgrounds by County Outside Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve
- Campgrounds by County Outside Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve Map
- Golf Courses
- Golf Courses Map
- Boat Launch Sites by State Parks or Marine Facility
- Boat Launch Sites by State Parks or Marine Facility Map



## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

- State Historic Sites
- State Historic Sites Map
- State Park Facility Points Map
- State Park Facility Points
- State Nature Centers
- State Nature Centers Map

### DEPARTMENT OF STATE

#### SCENIC COASTAL AREAS

*[www.dos.ny.gov/opd](http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd)*

The Department of State's Coastal Management Program assists New York in designating scenic areas of statewide significance (SASS), recognizing and providing additional protection for coastal landscapes important to the natural, historical, and cultural history of the State. Six SASS have been designated in the Hudson River corridor, covering over 50% of the shorelands between New York City and Troy. Each area encompasses unique, highly scenic landscapes which are accessible to the public and recognized for their beauty. Designation provides special protection to these landscapes.

#### HISTORIC MARITIME COMMUNITIES

DOS also assists in continuing our state's maritime legacy by preserving historical elements, supporting contemporary maritime uses in waterfront communities, and making both more accessible to the public to foster an appreciation of our maritime history.

NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010, Albany, NY 12231-0001. 518-474-6000

### Preserving Our Scenic, Historic and Cultural Heritage

#### NYS ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY

*[apa.ny.gov](http://apa.ny.gov)*

In 1971, the NYS Adirondack Park Agency (APA) was created by the State Legislature to develop long-range land-use plans for both public and private lands within the Park. In addition, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) provides guidelines for acquisitions of state lands within the Park.

NYS Adirondack Park Agency, P.O. Box 99, 1133 NYS Route 86, Ray Brook, NY 12977. 518-891-4050

#### LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

*[www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org)*

The Land Trust Alliance (Alliance) of the Northeast serves as a resource center for many of the more than 80 land trusts that operate in New York State. Since 2002, the Alliance has invested \$3 million to

## LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCES

---

build strong land trusts across the State. Combined, land trusts in New York hold about 185,000 acres of land through fee and easement acquisitions. To learn more about the Alliance's work in New York State, see the New York State Conservation Partnership Program under *Programs and Partnerships* within this chapter.

Land Trust Alliance – Northeast, 112 Spring Street, Suite 204, Saratoga, NY 12866.  
518-587-0774. [northeast@lta.org](mailto:northeast@lta.org)

### LAND TRUST ALLIANCE NEW YORK STATE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

[www.landtrustalliance.org/what-we-do/our-regional-programs/northeast/new-york-program/new-york-state-conservation-partnership](http://www.landtrustalliance.org/what-we-do/our-regional-programs/northeast/new-york-program/new-york-state-conservation-partnership)

Created in 2001, the New York State Conservation Partnership Program is a collaboration between the Land Trust Alliance and DEC that provides competitive matching grants and technical assistance to New York land trusts. Through this program, non-profit land trust organizations operating in New York State are eligible to receive competitive matching investments in four categories:

- Capacity and Excellence Grants;
- Conservation Catalyst Grants;
- Transaction Grants; and
- Professional Development Grants.

Funded projects help preserve land and natural resources prioritized in this Plan. To date, the Partnership Program has leveraged millions of dollars for land conservation, conserving more than 10,000 acres and creating a national model for capacity building and community-based conservation.

Land Trust Alliance – Northeast, 112 Spring Street, Suite 205, Saratoga, NY 12866  
518-587-0774. [northeast@lta.org](mailto:northeast@lta.org)

### USDA FOREST SERVICE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

[www.fs.fed.us/openspace](http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace)

In December 2007, the U.S. Forest Service published the Open Space Conservation Strategy, which charts a path for the Forest Service to work in partnership with states, local governments, landowners, and non-profit organizations to address the threat of losing open space. The strategy provides a framework to strengthen and focus existing and new Forest Service conservation actions across the agency.

The four priorities of the Strategy that will guide future Forest Service actions to conserve open space are: 1) Convene partners to identify and protect priority open space; 2) Promote national policies and markets to help private landowners conserve open space; 3) Provide resources and tools to help communities expand and connect open spaces; and 4) Participate in community-growth planning to reduce ecological impacts and wildfire risks.

The vision for the 21st century is an interconnected network of open space across the landscape that supports healthy ecosystems and a high quality of life for Americans. The Strategy emphasizes collaborative approaches and partnerships to achieve this vision. Of course, the Forest Service will work with willing landowners, states, and local governments to promote voluntary land conservation. The Forest Service is only one stakeholder among many dedicated landowners, governments, and organizations working to conserve open space across the country. The next step is implementation, which will occur at the national, regional, and local levels through collaboration to conserve open space across the landscape.



# REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

## LONG ISLAND – REGION 1

### REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

#### COUNTIES

#### NASSAU & SUFFOLK

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

##### NASSAU COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

Neil Lewis*	Sustainability Institute at Molloy College, Executive Director
Lisa Ott*	North Shore Land Alliance, President
Jim Ruocco	Operation SPLASH
Charles Theofan	Nassau County, Deputy County Executive
Robert Weltner*	Operation SPLASH

\* Returning Member

##### COMMISSIONERS' APPOINTEES

Charles Bevilacqua*	Conservation Fund Advisory Board, Board Member
Cynthia Barnes	Three Village Community Trust, President
Annette Eaderesto	Town of Brookhaven, Town Attorney
Richard Groh	Town of Babylon, Chief Environmental Analyst
John v. H. Halsey*	Peconic Land Trust, President
Jennifer A. Juengst	Shoreham Civic Organization, Inc.
Jill Lewis	Town of Riverhead, Deputy Town Supervisor
Margo Myles*	Town of Huntington, Open Space Conservation Coordinator
Martin Shea*	Town of Southampton, Chief Environmental Analyst
Melissa Spiro*	Town of Southold, Land Preservation Coordinator
Thomas B. Williams	Post-Morrow Foundation, Inc., Vice President

\* Returning Member

##### SUFFOLK COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

Robert DeLuca*	Group for the East End,
Kevin McDonald*	The Nature Conservancy, Director, Public Lands Conservation
Greg Dawson	Suffolk County, Commissioner of Parks
Jill Rosen-Nikoloff	Suffolk County, Director of Real Estate
Sara Lansdale	Suffolk County, Director of Planning

\* Returning Member

##### At Large Members

Janet Longo	Suffolk County, Supervisor, Real Property Acquisition
John Turner*	Town of Brookhaven, Open Space Program Consultant
Dawn Haight	Peconic Land Trust, Design Manager
Lauretta Fischer*	Suffolk County, Principal Environmental Analyst

**DEC REGIONAL CONTACTS**

Peter A. Scully	DEC Regional Director
Robert Marsh	DEC Natural Resources Supervisor
Heather Amster	DEC Real Property Supervisor
George Gorman	Parks Regional Director
Brian Foley	Parks Deputy Regional Director

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

March 15, 2013; April 19, 2013

**INTRODUCTION**

Long Island is only about 21,000 years old, a 118-mile long wrack line of glacial till left behind at the end of the last ice age. The terrain reads like an earth science text book. Rocky beaches hugging the coastal moraine on the north shore, followed by a swale of fertile inland rising to a second moraine down the center of the Island, descending to a sprawling glacial plain and white sand beaches on the Atlantic Ocean coast. Because it is situated at the biogeographical range limit for many northern and southern species of flora and fauna, Long Island is the most species diverse region in the State. Some preserves have the highest ratio of rare species to land area in the State. This beautiful Island supports farming, a vibrant fishing industry, world class outdoor recreation and tourism that contribute to both the Long Island and New York State economy. It also sits atop its sole source aquifer which provide drinking water to it nearly 3 million residents. It's a lot of special packed into a little place.

**HEALTHY PUBLIC, VIBRANT ECONOMY**

According to the TPL report, **Long Island's parks and open space provide direct economic benefits worth more than \$2.74 billion annually**, making parks and open space "significant drivers" of the Long Island economy. Economic benefits are derived from revenue generated by the tourism, farming, and fishing industries and from government cost savings attributable to the reduction in services required by open space and the "free" goods and services provided by functioning natural systems. Less easy to quantify but equally significant are the contributions of parks and open space to the quality of life that make Long Island a desirable place to live, work and play.

Long Island's tourism, farming and fishing industries are dependent in some way the benefits of protected open space. **Long Island's tourism industry produces \$4.7 billion in revenues annually**. Approximately 28 percent of tourists, an estimated 5.1 million people per year, come for the purpose of visiting Long Island beaches, parks, cultural attractions, vineyards, farms, and other open spaces. These visitors spend \$615 million annually in the local economy and generate \$27.3 million in sales tax revenue. Local residents also enjoy their parks and open spaces, paying \$1.48 billion per year for the recreational activities they engage in at park facilities.

**Suffolk County is the top agricultural revenue producer in the State;** direct sales in 2007 were \$288 million. Long Island wineries attract 1.2 million visitors per year who spend \$90 million during their visits, \$33.3 million at the wineries themselves. Additional revenue is generated by visitors who come to pick strawberries in spring, gather pumpkins and apples in fall and buy Christmas trees in winter. Long Island agriculture is dependent upon the availability of open space for crop production.

In 2009, **New York State fisheries produced over 34 million pounds of finfish, shellfish and crustaceans with a landed value of \$49.3 million, 99 percent of which occurred in Nassau and Suffolk counties.** According to the EDC, when a standard economic multiplier of 4.5 is applied, this translates into a regional economic value of close to \$220 million annually. Long Island fisheries support hundreds of jobs and Long Island businesses. The productivity of Long Island's fisheries is aided by the buffering effects of protect open space in watersheds.

**Parks and open space can bolster private property values.** People want to live and work in communities with abundant parks and preserves and will pay a premium to do so. Long Island real estate ads commonly boast, "Backs protected land," or "near trails," or "walking distance to duck pond."

**Parks and open space can also reduce the cost of government services associated with residential development,** such as police protection, road maintenance, waste management and education. Studies have shown that property tax revenue from residential development often fails to cover the cost of associated government services while the loss in property tax revenue when land comes off the tax rolls is most often offset by the savings from avoided services.

Long Island's parks and open spaces help safeguard public health by providing natural filtration of pollutants from the water and air. On Long Island, where **100% of the drinking water for 2.8 million residents comes from underground aquifers,** protecting the land through which the water filters is critically important. It costs up to ten times more to produce clean drinking water from wells where surrounding land is heavily developed than from wells in the Pine Barrens where the land is protected. New York City estimates it will save \$6.5 million by implementing an aggressive land acquisition program in its watershed rather than allowing development and treating contaminated waters.

Clean surface waters are necessary for healthy and functioning natural systems that provide numerous economic and environmental benefits. An estimate 40% of commercially important fin- and shellfish species depend on tidal wetlands and adjacent shallow water systems at the beginning of their life stages for food and shelter. Marsh grass root systems and shellfish beds stabilize shorelines and protect against coastal erosion. Long Island's freshwater wetlands and ponds provide critical habitat to many listed fish and wildlife species. Protected watershed lands naturally improve surface water quality by capturing precipitation, slowing runoff, and preventing pollutants from entering the surface waters. **On Long Island, this reduces storm water management costs by \$23.9 million annually.**

In New York's 2012 State of the Air Report, Suffolk County was deemed dirtiest in ozone pollution. Six of the 34 counties in New York State with air quality monitors received failing grades, compared with 16 out of 34 counties in 2011. On Long Island, Suffolk remained the dirtiest county in the state for ozone pollution and its grade for particle pollution worsened. It was the only county in the state to drop a letter grade for either pollutant. Nassau's levels for particle pollution improved slightly. Trees and shrubs can remove air pollutants that endanger human health and damage structures. **Tree cover on Long Island reduces pollution control costs by \$18.9 million per year.**

At parks, preserves and beaches across Long Island there has been a noticeable increase in use in recent years. Yoga classes meet in parks and biology classes in preserves. Parking lots at trail heads are full to capacity and nearly every car has a kayak rack on the roof or a bike rack on the back bumper. According to the TPL report, park use translates to increased physical activity which translates to medical costs savings. **Approximately 611,000 Long Islanders engage in physical activity on parkland at a level sufficient to generate measurable health benefits, yielding annual savings in medical costs of \$164 million.**

While the physical benefits of park use are compelling, other less quantifiable benefits are equally so. Richard Louv, in his two ground-breaking books: "Last Child in the Woods" and "The Nature Principle" has documented the societal benefits that result from a deeper human-natural world connection provided by access to local parks and preserves. These benefits include better academic and workplace performance, lower crime rates, stronger families less prone to fracture, and more rapid healing by patients. On Long Island, these benefits can help ease the unique tensions associated with living within commuting distance of New York City, such as soul-sucking traffic jams, aged and overburdened infrastructure, and an extremely high cost of living.

Unfortunately, Long Island's park and open space resources are not evenly distributed. In densely populated neighborhoods near older industrial and commercial areas or abandoned downtowns, there are often no natural areas or parks, no physical or visual access to the water. Environmental justice is the right of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, income or ability, to have access to parks and open space and to participate in environmental decision-making.

**In Nassau and Suffolk Counties, approximately 30 Potential Environmental Justice Areas (PEJAs) have been identified.** These PEJA's represent population blocks with at least 51.1% reporting to be members of a minority or at least 23.59% reporting household incomes below the federal poverty level. PEJA neighborhoods stand to benefit most from open space conservation. Creating green spaces where there are none, transforming brownfields to parks for recreation and exercise, and restoring natural systems for a cleaner environment can help revitalize communities, attract businesses and homebuyers, and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

**Perhaps the most pressing issues facing Long Island that can be addressed by the conservation of open space are the impacts of severe weather and sea-level rise associated with**



**climate change.** Recent severe weather events destroyed thousands of homes and businesses on Long Island; financial losses are estimated to be in the billions. Nine months after Super Storm Sandy some south shore neighborhoods remain uninhabitable. The impact on human psyche is immeasurable.

While many people favor expensive engineered solutions to flooding and coastal erosion to protect against loss of property and life, many more are coming to believe that the wiser, more sustainable approach is to retreat from the shore and return coastal land to its natural condition so it can provide the buffering, filtering and protective functions nature intended.

### THOUGHTS

**With 90% of the land already developed, there may not be enough protected open space to support the economy and population into the future.** Immediate action is required to safeguard what little open space remains.

Additional public lands are needed now to ease the burden on existing public lands. Long Island's 2.8 million residents and 5.1 million tourists are overburdening Long Island's protected open spaces. Overcrowding is common and user conflicts are on the rise. Sensitive natural areas are being damaged and built amenities are deteriorating rapidly from overuse. The Regional Economic Development council suggests that with sufficient investment in open space conservation and park improvements, Long Island will be poised to develop a thriving new eco-tourism industry.

Long Island farmers are having difficulty staying afloat. Long Island's high property taxes and operational costs often force farmers to cave in to the high priced offers proffered by developers. Furthermore, would-be farmers on whom Long Island's future agricultural successes will rely can't find affordable land for start-up. More aggressive farmland preservation efforts are needed to preserve Long Island's historic and profitable farming culture, and to help Long Island tap into today's organic and eat-local trends, and the emerging agri-tourism industry. Farmland is valuable open space worthy of State protection.

Preventing development of land in Special Groundwater Protection Areas and Deep Flow Recharge Zones will help ensure the long-term integrity of Long Island's water supply and preclude the need for costly water filtration systems and groundwater remediation efforts.

Preventing development of watershed lands will reduce the amount of polluted runoff entering surface waters and impacting important natural systems. Storm water runoff frequently closes beaches to swimming, bottomlands to shellfish harvesting and a decline in marine production. The Economic Development Council recommends investment in fisheries, including habitat protection, to keep Long Island competitive in the industry. The Council also suggests that open space conservation is requisite for Long Island to become a leader in the emerging industries of ecotourism and aquaculture, both of which rely on healthy and functioning natural systems for success.

Returning shorelines and floodplains to their natural condition will increase the land's ability to withstand coastal flooding and remove people and property from harm's way, reducing the need for costly clean-ups and repairs, emergency response, and personal injury and death.

New York State has invested very little in open space conservation in recent years. In the few years before the 2009 Open Space Plan was released, New York was spending \$40 to \$60 million per year on land conservation. Beginning in 2009, that amount dropped to under \$20 million, very little of which was spent on Long Island. Since the 2009, New York State has acquired just one property on Long Island using EPF dollars: Gene's Four Seasons, 100 acres in the Central Pine Barrens, for \$5,075,000.

Local government has been able to pick up some of the slack, with conservation spending approaching \$1 billion since 2009. The largest expenditures were by Suffolk County and the East End towns using Community Preservation Funds. In addition, Nassau County and several Long Island towns and villages passed bond referendums to fund acquisition. Lands trusts large and small launched private fundraising campaigns to contribute to municipal efforts. While local government completed dozens of projects listed in the 2009 Open Space Plan, New York State completed just four.

**The tremendous time and effort expended by the Regional Advisory Committees and agency staff to prepare this report will be considered wasted if the EPF is not funded at meaningful levels moving forward.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Environmental Protection Fund should be fully funded, not as a nature venture, but as the most cost effective means of addressing some of New York's the most pressing economic concerns, including storm resiliency, climate change, and public health and safety.
- To protect as much as possible of the small amount of remaining open space on Long Island, the Region should receive an EPF line item appropriation of not less than \$15 million per year for the next ten years.
- In light of recent severe weather and sea-level rise, government buy-out of property in low lying coastal areas is a priority. The State should develop, fund and implement a coastal buy-out program and fully participate in any federal buy-out programs, preferably through a newly created bureau or agency, to acquire and return to its natural condition, coastal and floodplain lands.
- Long Island's fishing and tourism industries both rely on the cleaner environment that results from open space conservation. Acquisition of lands protecting surface water quality, coastal vistas and public access to the water should be a priority.

## REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS

---

- The State should significantly increase its funding support for farmland preservation. The Department and Parks should acquire agricultural easements as they would any other open space, or the Department of Agriculture and Markets should acquire agricultural easements on behalf of the State, in addition to providing grant funds to Ag District counties for local farmland protection efforts.
- Long Island’s underground drinking water supply is worth billions when weighed against the cost of pipelines and filtration. The land that filters this water is best protected by government acquisition in the Central Pine Barrens and in Special Groundwater Protection Areas across the Island. Significant funding is needed to preserve Long Island’s priceless water supply.
- As health costs soar and the economy falters, public parklands provide inexpensive venues for healthful outdoor recreation and peaceful connection to nature. Acquisition and development of land for outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, and more, will ultimately result in a lower medical costs and a happier and healthier public.
- Regional acquisition funding must include investment in PEJA neighborhoods, to support community revitalization and invigorate economic recovery.
- Amendment of tidal and freshwater wetland law and regulations. First written in the mid-1970's the freshwater and tidal wetland law and regulations have seen only minor revisions in the years since. The laws and regulations need to be updated to take into account current scientific research, new technologies, and case law that has taken place since the original documents were produced. The wetlands laws and regulations have proven to be vague and/or inadequate to deal with many of the potential impacts to the resource. Outdated laws can result in increased development on parcels that may be partially or wholly protected by more comprehensive regulations.
- NYSDEC State wetland mapping amendments are urgently needed for both freshwater and tidal wetlands. Many freshwater wetlands were missed in the original mapping effort and the dynamic nature of tidal wetlands means that both sets of data need to be updated to reflect current conditions. Outdated wetland maps can lead to increased development on parcels that may have been partially or wholly protected by wetland regulations.

From buffering people and property from floodwaters to filtering pollutants, from providing places where wildlife can live to places where we grow food, from increasing private property values to promoting tourism, protected open space provides many benefits, tangible and intangible, and is why “Open Space is often our best buy.” To summarize from a Trust for Public Lands report, important, life-sustaining services that open space provides for free include:

Degradation of organic wastes  
Filtration of pollutants from soil and water  
Buffering of air pollutants  
Moderation of climate change  
Conservation of soil and water and recharge of water supplies  
Provision of medicine, building products, food products, pigments,  
Preservation of genetic diversity  
Flood storage and control  
Pollination of food crops

Environmental economists have placed the global value of these services and eight other open space benefits at \$33 *trillion* dollars on an annual basis. New York lawmakers should jump at the chance to tap this windfall for the Empire State.

**NEW YORK CITY – REGION 2  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**COUNTIES**

BRONX, KINGS (BROOKLYN), NEW YORK (MANHATTAN), QUEENS, RICHMOND (STATEN ISLAND)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**CITY APPOINTMENTS**

**Bronx Borough  
President's Office**

Sam Goodman  
851 Grand Concourse, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl  
Bronx, NY 10451

**Brooklyn Borough  
President's Office**

Elisabeth Ernish  
209 Joralemon Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

**Manhattan Borough  
President's Office**

Steve Corson  
1 Centre Street, 19th Fl.  
New York, NY 10007

**Queens Borough  
President's Office**

Alexandra Rosa  
120–55 Queens Blvd.  
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

**Staten Island Borough  
President's Office**

Nick Dmytryszyn  
10 Richmond Terrace  
Staten Island, NY 10301

Colleen Alderson,  
NYC Parks and Recreation  
830 Fifth Avenue Rm. 401  
New York, NY 10065

Bill Tai  
NYC Parks and Recreation  
830 Fifth Avenue Rm. 401  
New York, NY 10065

John McLaughlin  
NYC DEP  
59–17 Junction Blvd.  
Flushing, NY 11373

Michael Marrella  
NYC City Planning  
22 Reade Street  
New York, NY 10007

**STATE APPOINTMENTS**

Page Cowley  
Page Ayres Cowley Architects,  
LLC  
10 East 33rd Street, 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10016

Ellen Pratt  
Protectors of Pine Oaks  
Woods  
P.O. Box 140747  
Staten Island, NY 10314

Emina Sendich  
National Parks Service  
160 Beach Street  
New York, NY 10304

Murad Awawdeh  
UPROSE  
166A 22nd Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Jane Sokolow, Bronx Council  
for Environmental Quality  
Two Spaulding Lane  
Bronx, NY 10471

Robert Pirani  
Regional Plan Association  
4 Irving Place  
New York, NY 10003

Marc Matsil  
Trust for Public Land  
666 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012

Don Riepe  
Jamaica Bay Guardian  
West 9th Road  
Broad Channel, NY 11693

Tom Gravel  
Open Space Institute  
1350 Broadway, Suite 201  
New York, NY 10018

## REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS

---

Alyson Beha  
New Yorkers for Parks  
55 Broad Street, 23<sup>rd</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10004

A. Mychal Johnson  
South Bronx Unite  
335 E. 140<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx, NY 10454

Cecil Corbin Mark  
West Harlem Environmental  
Action  
1843 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York, NY 10031

LeAnn Shelton, Esq.  
Public Art Commission  
(former member)  
5 Union Square West  
New York, NY 10003

### EX OFFICIO

Karen Phillips, NYS OPRHP  
163 West 125th St., 17th Floor  
New York, NY 10027

Venetia Lannon, NYS DEC  
47-40 21st Street  
Long Island City, NY 11101

### ADVISORY MEMBERS

Chris Zeppie,  
Port Authority of NY/NJ  
225 Park Ave. South  
New York, NY 10003

Robert Nyman, Program  
Director  
NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program  
US EPA Region II  
290 Broadway, 24th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

### COMMISSIONERS' APPOINTEES

Gordon Whiting  
Conservation Fund Advisory Board

### COMMITTEE MEETINGS

February 25, 2013; March 21, 2013; April 22, 2013; May 15, 2013

### INTRODUCTION

The New York City – Region 2 Advisory Committee (RAC) for the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan convened four times over a twelve week period to review the status of previously listed properties and identify additional parcels to be included in a new regional Priority List for potential purchase under the State Land Acquisition Plan. In meetings lead by the regional offices of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), the Region 2 RAC also discussed the strategic importance of measures other than acquisition for preserving open space in New York City (NYC), where the cost of land is at a premium, noting in particular the successes that can be achieved through land transfers between public agencies and annexing new properties to already established public open space.

Recent estimates project that the population of the five boroughs will increase to nine million by 2030. Continuing to be relevant to the ongoing discussions about preserving and expanding the

City's open space resources, the Mayor of New York City's report and planning document updated in 2011 called "PlaNYC: A Greener, Greater New York," which emphasizes that the supply of land is a fixed commodity in New York City, describes a range of issues related to sustainable development in the context of a growing population, and sets forth a proposed series of actions and recommendations to protect and improve the environment and quality of life in the five boroughs, still remains valid. This effort has been supplemented by revisions to the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission Guidelines incorporating "Greening New York City's Historic Buildings: Green Rowhouse Manual," the NYC Department of Buildings Green Roofs initiatives and the NYC Department of City Planning's "Zone Green Text Amendments" and Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan all aimed at promoting sustainable communities. These recent requirements indicate the forward thinking of the quality of our city and the importance of open space in our neighborhoods. Certainly, this projected population growth would generate unprecedented development pressure and could have a profound effect on the amount and quality of open space, parkland, and historic preservation resources within the City.

In preparing its recommendations for the 2013 Open Space Conservation Plan, the Region 2 RAC reviewed the successes and missed opportunities over the previous open space conservation planning cycles. Based on this review, there is increased concern that, due to the rising costs of securing waterfront land, inner city parks, and historic buildings for public use, the region will continue to lose properties on its Priority List at an ever accelerating pace. A significant dilemma for Region 2 is that the initial investment of public funds associated with securing lands for open space typically is not accompanied by adequate resources to maintain and manage the newly-acquired sites. Many sites recommended for transfer between government agencies for conservation purposes are not moved for this reason. This is particularly important when dramatic inflationary pressures continuously escalate the stewardship costs for these newly preserved properties as well as for existing preserved properties.

The impacts and after effects of Superstorm Sandy which hit the region in late October 2012 were a primary concern to the convened group. As with other large storm events over the past few years, New York City incurred significant coastal flooding and damage in many public parks and natural areas. Major portions of the City's coastlines were greatly affected by the storm, including wide expanses of public beachfront areas along with their protective dunes which were severely eroded. Areas of particular damage along the City's coastline areas included the South and Eastern Shore of Staten Island and along the Rockaway Peninsula. The substantial beach areas, as well as protective dunes, had previously buffered the waves and kept flood waters from entering the residential areas that are upland of the public beachfront areas. This event was a serious reminder that our protected open space serves many needs beyond a place to recreate.

In the 2010 New York State Sea Level Rise Task Force Report, a recommendation was made to modify the evaluation criteria of the State Open Space Plan, to include acquisition of coastal natural protective features. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, the NYS 2100 Commission developed recommendations to improve resilience of our built and natural systems. These

included a recommendation to acquire and protect land that may be prone to damage from climate effects, as well as land that may buffer or protect other lands from these risks. Consistent with these recommendations, Governor Cuomo has developed a program to buy-out homeowners who voluntarily wish to vacate their storm damaged homes. The properties would then remain undeveloped, adding to regional open space which will enhance natural infrastructure and add buffer capacity to adjacent neighborhoods.

In December 2012, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg created the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) to address long-term climate change resiliency in New York City and to build upon ongoing efforts under PlaNYC and lessons learned after Sandy. A comprehensive report will soon be released outlining actionable recommendations both for rebuilding the communities impacted by Sandy, increasing the resilience of infrastructure and buildings citywide, and addressing coastal protection. The report will provide recommendations and projects to adapt parks and open space to provide community flood protection, necessary upgrades to allow for park facilities to resist damage due to flooding and strong wind conditions, and additional ideas to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Increasing the extent of protected wetland areas and implementing green infrastructure are also to be key components of the plan.

### REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ACHIEVEMENTS

The Region 2 RAC took note of significant open space successes achieved since the last open space plan update was published in 2009. The Committee estimates that since the last report, at least 343 acres of land have been protected through acquisitions and/or transfers of government land for conservation purposes.

One of the key benefits of the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan process is that it not only guides the land conservation efforts of state agencies, but also provides a framework for cooperation with partners in other sectors of government and the nonprofit and philanthropic communities. Since the 2009 updated plan was adopted, tremendous progress has been made in protecting the properties listed on the 2009 Region 2 Priority List. While the State of New York, through DEC and OPRHP, took a strong leadership role on several of these projects, these land conservation efforts were greatly enhanced by the work of other organizations.

The Committee notes that no New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) dollars have been spent in New York City for land acquisition since January 2001, with the purchase of East River State Park (former Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal). In this context, the amount of open space conservation that has been achieved is even more remarkable, and can be attributed to the work of the partners noted below as well as the resourcefulness of the state agencies in Region 2 in using federal grants, private financing, and environmental benefit funds linked to consent orders and legal settlements to successfully acquire land. The efforts of the following partners were instrumental in achieving these remarkable successes:



**The City of New York:** The City, through the Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) and the Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP), has its own robust land acquisition program that often overlaps with and complements the State's efforts. Since June 2009, NYCDPR has acquired 236 acres for open space and recreational use in the five boroughs. In furtherance of the City's Staten Island Bluebelt Program to preserve natural drainage corridors, including streams, ponds, and other wetland areas, NYCDEP acquired 60 acres to aid in stormwater management.

**The Port Authority of NY & NJ:** In 2001, the Port Authority initiated the Hudson Raritan Estuary Resources Program, allocating \$30 million in New York and \$30 million in New Jersey for habitat protection purposes. To date, the Port Authority has helped protect nine sites totaling nearly 395 acres in the two states, including nearly 45 acres added in New York since 2009.

### **The Trust for Public Land:**

The Trust for Public Land is the nation's leader in creating city parks and green open spaces. In cities across America, The Trust for Public Land is working to ensure that everyone—in particular, every child—enjoys close-to-home access to a park, playground, or open space. In New York, The Trust for Public Land's work preserves and remediates green space, protects drinking water and local food sources, safeguards wildlife habitats, and helps connect people to the natural world. In Region 2, The Trust for Public Land most recently has teamed-up with NYS DEC, the City of New York and the Port Authority of NY & NJ to protect resilient landscapes including Pouch Camp in Staten Island (42.74 acres). An additional 1.25 acres (Jamaica Bay/Bch 88<sup>th</sup> St.) and 0.60 acres (Depot Place) have also been preserved since the release of the 2009 Open Space Conservation Plan.

**Specific land conservation successes include, but are not limited to:**

#### **A. ACQUISITIONS**

### **Waterfront Access**

#### **Bronx/New York Waterfront**

- **Bridge Park, Bronx:** Four acres were added to the existing NYCDPR property located south of Roberto Clemente State Park. Two parcels totaling 3.345 acres were added through the transfer of city-owned property, and in 2011, a .687 parcel was donated to the City as an addition to Bridge Park. The donation was made possible through TPL in partnership with the Port Authority. In addition to Bridge Park, State Parks acquired the 2.1 DCAS lot adjoining Clemente to the south.
- **Harlem River Park, New York:** 1.19-acres of city-owned property between West 142 Street and West 145<sup>th</sup> Streets were transferred to NYCDPR in furtherance of the Manhattan Harlem River Greenway.

### **Jamaica Bay Protection Area**

- **Sunset Cove Park:** A 9.375-acre waterfront parcel in Broad Channel and previously leased to a private entity for boat storage was transferred to NYCDPR in 2009 for the preservation and restoration of wetlands and to facilitate public access on the upland portion of the site.
- **The Beach 88<sup>th</sup> Street parcel, Queens:** The parcel fronting Jamaica Bay was donated to the City by TPL with funding authorized in 2001 by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey as part of the Hudson–Raritan Estuary Resources Program.

### **Brooklyn/Queens East River Waterfront**

- Between 2009 and 2010 12.6 acres of city-owned land were assigned to NYCDPR for purposes of the development of **Brooklyn Bridge Park**.
- In Williamsburg, Brooklyn the **North 5<sup>th</sup> Street Pier** was deeded to the City by a private developer, who will continue to provide funding to the City for maintenance of the pier in perpetuity. It should be noted that the pier incurred damage from Superstorm Sandy and repairs are required.

### **Staten Island Greenbelt**

- **Pouch Camp** TPL purchased a conservation easement covering a 43-acre portion of the 120-acre property, made possible by a collaborative effort between the Port Authority, NYSDEC, and a New York City capital budget allocation. The conservation easement is held by NYSDEC.
- **Manor Road** In 2010 the City of New York acquired the two-acre property at the border of the Greenbelt to aid in the preservation of wetlands.

### **Staten Island Northshore Greenbelt**

- A 15-acre portion of the Goodhue (a.k.a. The Children’s Aid Society) property was acquired by NYCDPR; a 23-acre area remains to be acquired.
- An 11-acre city-owned property along the waterfront between Van Name and Van Pelt Avenues, Richmond Terrace Wetlands, was transferred to NYCDPR. This parcel was recommended for transfer to NYCDPR by the City of New York’s Wetlands Transfer Task Force,

### **From the Additional Properties of Importance List:**

- West Harlem Piers
- Port Morris/Randall’s Island Connector & South Bronx Greenway (Block 2543 Lot 1 (p/o) and Block 2583 Lot 2 (p/o))

### **OPEN SPACE PLANNING ISSUES**

- 1. Improving Land Management Capability.** One of the guiding principles of the Plan is that the need for adequate management and stewardship must be taken into account in efforts to preserve open space. Unfortunately, the fiscal and human resources available to properly manage and improve new property assets have not been adequate. While Region 2 agencies such as the State OPRHP's Regional Office and NYCDPR may have large operations programs, they face significant challenges given the large number of park visitors and the urban context of these facilities. As a result these agencies find it difficult to absorb new properties that would help them meet their missions and provide a standard level of care without commensurate increases in maintenance program resources. Region 2 DEC plays an important role in acquiring open space priority parcels yet lack the resources for adequate staffing to address property management. Support for land management activity must improve if we are to rightfully label our open space conservation accomplishments as "successes."
- 2. Conserving Precious Natural Resources.** In Region 2, the dynamic tension between environmental protection, natural resources management, and development pressures is an especially complex and delicate challenge. For example, the Staten Island Borough President's representative objected again to inclusion of the Gulfport Marsh and Uplands as a priority site, based on the site's value as a location for potential economic development. The nomination of this site, it should be noted, included a recognition that some part of the upland (non-wetland) property may be suitable for development, noting that it may be appropriate to establish a corridor for access to an existing dock on the property that would accommodate some future water-dependent use on the eastern portion of the site near Gulf Avenue. The Borough President's objections illustrate that some careful balancing of economic and open space values is likely to be needed at this site. Discussed during the last planning process, The Port Authority, which serves in an advisory capacity to the Region 2 RAC, is advancing its project for the replacement of the Goethal's Bridge. The project is being carried forward with the proposed protection of forty city-owned acres along Old Place Creek, thereby demonstrating that updating the City's critical infrastructure can be done while protecting the City's natural resources.

Over the past 20 years, large industrial operations across the City have been closing, prompting land use and zoning changes that facilitate a variety of new development activities. A significant number of these sites are located on the waterfront or along inlets that provide ideal opportunities for public access to the shoreline and, in some cases, they have become wildlife habitat. In many of these areas, bird habitats have begun to revitalize, and in certain water channels increased fish populations have been detected. Potential opportunities to preserve or create waterfront open space in Region 2 continue to increase, particularly along the eastern shore of the East River, where local parks and pathways can be created. Establishment of bike and pedestrian trails along New York City's shoreline has long been a priority of Region 2, as successful acquisitions in the five boroughs have amply demonstrated. It should be noted that the Bronx Borough President's representative objected to the Mott Haven/Port Morris waterfront project nomination due to concerns about the potential for displacement of existing uses in the

Mott Haven area. However, the committee supports the priority status for the Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront Plan because it would designate merely 20 acres of waterfront land as open space within the current 850 acre South Bronx Significant Maritime Industrial Area (SMIA), all of which is in a flood zone. The plan would preserve portions of the waterfront that have been unoccupied/underutilized for the last 20 years to help guard against the effects of climate change storm surges on the community and on the borough’s electrical grid and other important infrastructure (noting that most of the Southern Bronx power plants are located in this area). The plan is also consistent with City Council residential rezonings of adjacent land, and sites within the plan have been included in the Vision 2020 NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan as well as recognized by the Historic Districts Council.

- 3. Ensuring Equitable Distribution of Open Space.** As the built environment increases to the maximum allowed by zoning across New York City, the higher population density that comes with it places more burdens on existing playgrounds and parks. Many of these amenities are already very heavily utilized, and they need significant cyclical maintenance and capital improvements to handle increased use and wear. The amount of acreage devoted to public gardens and small parks must also increase to keep pace with this rise in the number of households. Fortunately, in Region 2 there has been continued interest in increasing the number of community gardens and expanding the amount of open space in underserved communities. The pressing need for open space in underserved neighborhoods across the City necessitates a continued focus on conserving, acquiring, or preserving smaller sites. While expending time and energy on securing such sites may not initially appear to be an efficient use of relatively scarce resources, in fact the acute lack of open space in these communities gives every square foot that is set aside far greater value as a public amenity, proportionally, than larger parcels in less densely populated areas.
- 4. Connecting and Augmenting Larger Urban Parks.** Continuing efforts to reclaim or “repurpose” federal land once used by the military, and to rezone former industrial areas along the waterfront, has created a rare opportunity to design and build large new public spaces in the City. For example, Governors Island, large sections of the Brooklyn waterfront in Red Hook, Sunset Park, and in Greenpoint and Williamsburg, all have envisioned and featured significant open space components. It is important that, as redevelopment of these sites goes forward, implementation of the commitments to provide public amenities, such as open space and recreational areas, be closely monitored. Linear parks and greenways serve an important function in connecting residential areas to large urban parks, and similarly to small neighborhood parks, have a particularly high value in densely populated urban areas. The repurposing or reallocation of existing city-owned land, requiring no acquisition action or transfer of property, would be beneficial to encourage safe access to larger networks of open space, or in some cases, would facilitate waterfront access points through the development of street ends where they meet the water. Specific suggestions by committee members included the creation of on-street bike routes along Bronx River Avenue in the Bronx to facilitate short term connections to existing parks along the Bronx River corridor before longer term

acquisitions of waterfront parcels may be possible. Additionally, nominations were put forward for improving pedestrian facilities within the existing street right of way north of Ferry Point Park to help facilitate safe pedestrian access to Ferry Point within the community and for creating access points to Westchester Creek. Enhancing the existing available open space within Co-Op City to facilitate canoe and kayak access to the Hutchinson River was also discussed amongst the committee members. Also in the Bronx, the idea of establishing a pedestrian bridge to join the eastern and western portions of the historic Old Croton Aqueduct Trail within Van Cortlandt Park would provide for a continuous trail experience.

- 5. Protecting Historic and Cultural Resources.** The rezoning of industrial sites along the waterfront presents an opportunity to memorialize the industrial age here in New York City. A model for this is the sequential implementation and development of the High-Line Park, which makes use of elevated and abandoned rail lines to create a striking public amenity on Manhattan's West Side. This has been remarkably successful. Using or adaptively re-using existing historic buildings and structures with open space and recreational uses, our waterfront and maritime history could be approached in the same creative manner. For example, historic structures on Governor's Island, in New York Harbor and Fort Totten in Queens are both decommissioned military bases and are being re-developed for schools, non-profits as well as contextual new development to support the costs associated with management of these public properties for tourists and for the immediate neighborhoods. In our last report, it was hoped that the former Brooklyn Navy Yard, purchased by the City of New York in 1967, once known as America's premier shipbuilding facility, could be rescued and adapted in such a way. However, because of long lapses without maintenance funding, much of the historic fabric was deemed unsalvageable and recently demolished in favor of new development as an industrial park. This could have been an extraordinary opportunity for historic preservation and recreational use within the 300 acre site. Today, such large parcels are becoming rarer but this emphasizes the need for both greater public awareness and the urgency of taking action, even if smaller pieces could be purchased over time. Preservation of the remaining historic buildings, especially as they relate to open space conservation and waterfront access, should be made a priority by the City as re-using exiting buildings is now an acceptable sustainable concept and preserves our architectural heritage as well.
- 6. Facilitating Land Transfers.** Although the acquisition of privately-held lands for the purpose of open space conservation remains critical, many properties that are already publicly-owned through federal, state, and city agencies could be formally and permanently "repurposed" for recreational use. The relatively high-cost of land in Region 2 makes this kind of land transfer from public agencies an especially important mechanism for open space conservation – often entailing little or no cost for hundreds of acres. For instance, rail corridors such as the North Shore Railroad could be excellent candidates for conversion to recreational trailway use. While obstacles sometimes exist to such transfers in the Region, such as the need to remediate environmental contamination or address public safety and security concerns, a limited number of transfers as identified in the attached list entitled "Suggested Government

Properties With Potential for Inter-Agency Transfer for Public Open Space/Recreational Use” were achieved since 2006 as noted in the land conservation successes noted above. Many properties remain to be transferred as identified by the City of New York’s Wetlands Transfer Task Force, charged with analyzing and identifying which city-owned properties should be transferred to other public agencies for preservation. Some properties on the Priority List could be made even more attractive and valuable as open space assets by coupling them with strategic land transfers.

- 7. Responding to Climate Change** The devastating impacts of Hurricane Sandy and Irene have underscored the importance of adapting to a changing climate. New York State is likely to be visited by larger and more frequent hurricanes, nor’easters and other storms. Heat waves are also of concern, especially in densely-populated urban areas such as Region 2. Sea level rise will likely accelerate along the coastline. In 2013, 640,000 more people will be included in the City’s revised flood evacuation zone mapping based upon updated storm surge modeling by the National Weather Service. Potentially double the number of buildings around the City will be considered at high risk of flooding as FEMA completes its first revision of base flood elevations in more than 30 years. New inundation and surge maps have already initiated changing land use discussions and will continue to as the City responds to future climate change effects. As recognized by the Governor’s 2100 Commission, open space conservation can play an important role in mitigating these hazards and protecting people and property. Protecting wetlands and other open spaces along shorelines can be instrumental in mitigating hazards in the coastal zone. Properly designed, these public spaces can absorb floodwaters and wave impacts, reducing exposure for residents, upland property and emergency service providers. They can enable wetland to retreat as sea levels rise, reducing erosion while sustaining fisheries and other important ecological benefits into the future. It is also important to note that green spaces can reduce “heat island” impacts, lowering local and ambient temperatures through shade and evapotranspiration.

Given these parameters, the Committee focused on those land acquisitions and open spaces that are along the rivers, harbors and coastal areas of New York City. The new Advisory Base Flood Elevation standards proposed by FEMA, reform of the federal flood insurance program, greater incidences of storms and increased perception of risk among coastal property owners is likely to result in increased opportunity for land acquisition along the coastline over time. While there was recognition that some parcels also have economic/development value, in general the Committee voted in favor of acquiring and preserving a number of important coastal and riparian parcels in our Waterfront Access and other categories. As this revision of the NYS Open Space Plan is being finalized, the initial phase of one of the most ambitious post-disaster property buyouts ever pursued is moving forward. The State intends to purchase more than 1,000 high-risk properties and demolish storm-damaged structures in order to permanently conserve these lands. Most of the properties identified in Region 2 are in Brooklyn and Staten Island. They could not be re-developed and instead would be left as natural buffer areas to protect against future storms. While we are not able to explicitly list these “buy-out”

sites among our regional priority acquisition recommendations, clearly these properties represent important opportunities for expanding open space and providing storm protection and should be given priority consideration. Likewise, an ongoing study by NYCDPR will soon identify locations where vulnerable natural infrastructure, such as salt marsh habitats, may be able to migrate landward in response to rising sea level. These sites, once identified, should also be given priority consideration for preservation.

### NEW YORK CITY FUNDING & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Region 2 RAC recommends the following:

The Region 2 RAC recommends the following:

#### A. Improve Land Management Capability

1. Provide sufficient dedicated positions in Region 2 City and State agencies for the management of their public open spaces.
2. Increase EPF stewardship funding to the Region by:
  - a. Developing a companion program to the Open Space Conservation Plan to provide an initial EPF stewardship award at the time of property acquisition for immediate property needs (i.e. boundary marking, debris removal, proper access); and
  - b. Giving priority to EPF stewardship funding requests for parcels acquired through the Open Space Conservation Plan.
3. Implement a campaign to foster public participation in land management by:
  - a. Encouraging formation of dedicated advocacy groups (i.e. "alliance", "conservancy" or "friends of..." organizations);
  - b. Promoting existing stewardship programs such as DEC's Volunteer Stewardship program; and
  - c. Conducting a regular public program of site management activities such as clean-ups, planting or ecological surveys.
4. Ensure availability of resources for environmental remediation of open space properties as needed.

#### B. Conserve Precious Natural Resources

1. Review the Open Space Conservation Planning Process to determine how the possible impact of anthropogenic climate change should be incorporated into future cycles, particularly with respect to buffering the potential impacts of sea level rise and extreme climatic events such as floods and hurricanes.
2. Develop guidance on how increased attention to stormwater management in urban areas should affect the design, acquisition, and conservation of open space in New York State. There are current new initiatives of eliminating hard surfaced pavements behind apartment buildings and rear yards, to alleviate excessive storm water at times when the storm drainage system are at capacity. This has the additional benefit of permitting

rainwater and rainwater run-off to irrigate open space that can be used as green islands in built-up and inner city neighborhoods.

3. Allocate Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) money in a systematic way to ensure that Region 2 obtains a fair share allocation of EPF funds.

### **C. Ensure Equitable Distribution of Open Space.**

1. Develop policy guidance to facilitate the establishment of dedicated funding revenue streams from State-authorized "payments in lieu of taxes" for the acquisition and management of open space parcels in underserved communities.
2. Establish a set of criteria or benchmarks by which to measure progress achieved in the equitable distribution of open space in underserved communities.
3. Increase the purchase of sufficient smaller parcels in underserved communities to achieve the benchmarks for equitable distribution of open space. [The State should expand or develop flexible cooperative models with the City to manage these smaller parcels, where appropriate and mutually beneficial, while ensuring accountability for proper management.]
4. Allocate EPF money in a systematic way to promote equitable distribution of open space based on community and population needs.

### **D. Connect and Augment Larger Urban Parks**

1. Promote development of greenways that connect park lands.
2. Enhance the connections between park lands and residential neighborhoods.
3. Improve mass transit access to open space resources (for example, through strategic extension of bus routes).
4. Promote further establishment of greenbelts and bluebelts.
5. Create new streetends where they meet the City's waterways to provide opportunities for waterfront viewing and access, where appropriate.

### **E. Protect Historic and Cultural Resources**

1. Allocate EPF money strategically to protect historic and cultural resources within or adjacent to open space areas.

### **F. Facilitate Land Transfers**

1. Establish Regional Interagency Working Groups that meet regularly to evaluate state-owned lands within each region to determine whether they could be transferred to DEC or ORPHP (or appropriate local agencies) for use as open space.
2. Explore appropriate ways to maximize public access to publicly owned open space, including where those parcels are owned by agencies that are not specifically parks or environmental agencies.

### **G. Responding to Climate Change**



## REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS

---

1. Prioritize parcels for acquisition or government transfer that are located in high-risk flood and storm surge zones.
2. Explore funding opportunities to aid in the restoration and protection of wetlands that are on the government transfer list.
3. Continue to identify opportunities on federal, state and city lands to expand the urban tree canopy and coordinate new tree plantings with PlaNYC and Million Trees NYC.
4. Explore partnerships in education and research within new Cooperative Management Area at Jamaica Bay and support the establishment of the Jamaica Bay Science and Resiliency Center.

**LOWER HUDSON VALLEY – REGION 3  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
COUNTIES**

DUTCHESS, ORANGE, PUTNAM, ROCKLAND, SULLIVAN, ULSTER, WESTCHESTER

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Commissioner Appointments**

Seth McKee	Scenic Hudson
Morton Adams	Catskill Institute for the Environment
Cara Lee	The Nature Conservancy
Robert Ewald	Region 3 Fish & Wildlife Mgmt Board
Andrew Chmar	Hudson Highlands Land Trust
Edward Goodell	NY/NJ Trail Conference
Paula Medley	The Bashakill Area Association
Rebecca Thornton	Dutchess Land Conservancy

**County Appointments**

Westchester County	Ed Buroughs, County Planning Commissioner
Putnam County	Dod Chahoudi (appointed in 2008)
Dutchess County	Noela Hooper, Sr. Planner, County Planning Dept.
Rockland County	Allen Beers, Coordinator, Division of Environmental Resources
Orange County	Dave Church, County Planning Commissioner
Sullivan County	Jill Weyer, Assistant Commissioner, County Division of Planning & Environmental Management
Ulster County	Ms. Cindy Lanzetta, County Environmental Mgmt Council

**Affiliate Members**

Marc Matsil/Robert Palumbo	Trust for Public Land
Candace Schafer	Westchester Land Trust
James Delaune/Mary Yrizarry	Orange County Land Trust
Robert Anderberg/Paul Elconin	Open Space Institute
Alan White	Catskill Center for Conservation & Development
Mark King	The Nature Conservancy
Dave Tobias/Abbie Duchon	NYC DEP
Mark Castiglione/Scott Keller	Hudson River Valley Greenway
Lucy Hayden	Winnakee Land Trust
Kevin Smith	Woodstock Land Trust
Amanda LaValle	Ulster County Dept of the Environment
Jennifer Garofalini	Mohonk Preserve

Andy Bicking/Matt Shipkey	Scenic Hudson
John Sansalone	Citizen
John Adams	Friends of Colony Farm
John Gebhards	Citizen
Heather Brown	Sullivan County Planning Dept.
Katrina Shindledecker	Hudson Highlands Land Conservancy

### COMMITTEE MEETINGS

February 26, 2013; March 21, 2013; April 22, 2013; May 21, 2013; July 2, 2013

### Introduction

The Region 3 Open Space Committee considered closely the concerns of Commissioners Harvey and Martens as expressed in their letter to the Committee's members in March 2013. The Committee believes that our recommendations for open space conservation and public policy directly respond to these concerns. Specifically:

- Ensuring clean water, air and land for a healthy public and vibrant economy can be accomplished through strategic conservation in Region 3, which is replete with surface and subsurface drinking water supplies, intact forest blocks, impressive biodiversity, productive agricultural lands and impressive outdoor recreation destinations;
- Greening New York's economy can be helped along through continued investments in our region's green infrastructure, working farmland, and tourism development;
- The regional report is replete with recommendations for protecting natural resources and promoting outdoor recreation;
- Increasing, deepening and improving the visitor experience can be accomplished through continued investments in creating assemblages of conserved land and developing long-distance trails, both of which are highlighted in the regional recommendations;
- Our policy recommendations directly address the goal of creating a sustainable 21st century park system;
- The regional report's recommendations on public policy and a focus on urban park access and trail development address environmental justice and community revitalization; and
- Many of our priority projects have been revised to incorporate climate change considerations.

With the Hudson Highlands, the Hudson River corridor, the Palisades, Shawangunk Ridge, the Catskill Mountains, the flats of the Wallkill River and the Taconic range, the Lower Hudson Valley has an extremely diverse natural landscape rich in wildlife habitat including 22 significant habitat types that support a diverse array of species of greatest conservation need (SCGN).\*

Region 3's proximity to New York City places it in a unique position as steward of the watershed and fresh food sources for the New York metropolitan area and the urban centers within these seven counties, including Yonkers, Peekskill, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, Beacon, White Plains, and Kingston. The protection of its drinking water supplies, wetlands, upland forests, and agricultural lands is essential to the public health and continued viability of these urban areas as well as their

surrounding communities. The value of clean drinking water supplied by functioning ecosystems, and the importance of protecting those reservoirs and aquifers is becoming more obvious as NYC aqueduct repair work begins and as the link between land use, impervious surfaces, and water quality becomes increasingly clear. Many of the priority projects below overlap with areas used to supply drinking water to cities and towns of the Lower Hudson Valley. Water supply protection throughout the Valley should continue to be a top priority for open space projects.

As we evaluate our region's open space needs of the future, it will be vitally important to consider the resources which provide natural resilience in the face of climate change. With increased precipitation and higher intensity storms, the protection of floodplains, wetland complexes and forested riparian zones becomes more important than ever before, as a cost effective measure to help manage flood waters, while also protecting clean water supplies. Further, protected waterfront open space in our Hudson River communities will help mitigate the impacts of sea level rise and allow for migration of valuable wetland habitat. Continuing to invest in open space resources that serve as natural, or soft, infrastructure will contribute to the long term health and resiliency of our communities. Consistent with the findings of the NYS 2100 Commission Report, these investments can and will meet multiple economic, health and infrastructure objectives in a cost effective way.

The recreational opportunities in the Middle Hudson Valley are unsurpassed, from water sports on the Hudson and Delaware rivers and their tributaries to climbing, cycling, and hiking the Catskills and the 'Gunks to visiting and traveling along an emerging regional trails system including a unified Dutchess–Ulster Trails System and Walkway Over the Hudson (a project successfully completed in 2009). The spectacular scenery of our region, well–documented in the New York State Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance, continues to be a powerful tourism draw and quality of life amenity that brings professionals to the area to live, work, and/or recreate, and contributes to the local economy.

Protected public lands in Region 3 are a vital economic resource: a 2009 report by the Political Economy Research Institute found that each dollar invested in parks generates five dollars in local economic activity. In 2009 the Taconic Region alone had 957 private sector jobs and \$102 million in economic activity linked to the public parks system.\* Similarly, a 2012 study found that recreational opportunities on the Catskills' publicly owned State and New York City lands and private lands open to the public, draw over 1.7 million visitors annually, generating an economic impact of \$46,207,000 and supporting 980 jobs.\*\*

Most significantly, this is a region in which communities have a strong, sustained commitment to conservation and stewardship, with dedicated land trusts, local governments, and conservation organizations; historic preservation of the nation's earliest settlements and battlefields; and a long history of land protection and forest management, including the site of the nation's first tree plantation. The working forests, agricultural soils, functioning wetlands, scenic beauty and

accessible open spaces of the Lower Hudson Valley provide the natural, cultural, and recreational resources necessary for healthy communities.

\*2006 NYSDEC Conservation Framework.

\* To read the Region 3 Advisory Committee's full report, see: [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html).

\*The New York State Park System: An Economic Asset to the Empire State. March 2009

\*\* Economic Valuation Study for Public Lands in the Central Catskills, December 2012

### LOWER HUDSON VALLEY REGION 3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Environmental Protection Fund – increase land acquisition funding; keep fund dedicated;
- Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change – protect natural coastlines, wetland complexes, forest habitat and flood plains and provide riparian buffer protections;
- Urban Conservation – protect green edges and centers in our villages, towns, cities, and hamlets;
- Foodshed Protection – protect working farms critical to food security and our regional and local economy;
- Stewardship – strong and consistent funding to maintain public access and prevent deterioration of natural assets;
- Landscape-Scale Conservation – assure connectivity among protected lands to provide wildlife migration corridors, manage invasives, promote healthy eco-systems and greenways and water trails; and,
- Water quality and recreational use of watercourses should continue to be a high focus area.

#### FUNDING NEEDS

1. State Open Space Funding. The Committee appreciates recent increases in the Environmental Protection Fund and Open Space in particular, and urges the state to provide additional funding. Any funds generated by the Bottle Bill, the Real Estate Transfer Tax, and other sources that contribute to the Environmental Protection Fund should remain dedicated to the fund. Region 3 recommends a strong focus on protecting open spaces that are important in the context of sea level rise and flooding, establishing green edges and centers in urban centers, and securing the region's foodshed; development of municipal parks, and stewardship of open space resources.
2. State Farmland Protection Funding. The Committee appreciates increased funding for the Farmland Protection Program, and ongoing efforts by the Department of Agriculture and Markets to eliminate the backlog of old projects. The Committee urges the state to issue a new Request for Proposals to protect farms in the region.
3. Conservation Partnership Program. The Committee appreciates and supports the state's \$1.575 million funding of the Land Trust Alliance re-grant program to support the work of land trusts carrying out the goals of the Open Space Plan. The Committee urges the state to continue to do so and increase funding to enable land trusts to implement emerging open space protection needs. The Committee also encourages a return to

support of municipal (conservation advisory commission) and county (environmental management council) partners.

4. State Natural Resource Infrastructure Funding. The Committee appreciates the development of the new Natural Infrastructure program under the Water Quality Improvement Program and urges the state to consider how the program can help address open space and land protection needs in the region.
5. DEC and OPHRP Stewardship Funding. Sustain agency budgets in both capital and operations to perform needed stewardship functions.
6. Municipal Parks Grants. Committee appreciates the municipal parks grants program and suggests that funding be increased in future years to continue to serve municipalities, particularly underserved communities seeking to establish community gardens and other urban parks.

### FISCAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Funding Priorities

- a. Protect Open Space in the context of Sea Level Rise and Increased Floods. Region 3 strongly recommends increased funding to protection of lands that function as flood mitigators and carbon sequestration areas. This includes lands that are: vulnerable to inundation; help attenuate flooding and storm surges; buffer critical infrastructure; or facilitate the upland migration of tidal water bodies, intertidal and supratidal wetlands, and adjacent riparian buffers. The protection of wetlands, forests and riparian areas continue to be critical to mitigate climate change and provide migration corridors as habitats shift.
- b. Protect Open Space in the context of establishing Green Edges and Green Spaces in City and Village Centers. Region 3 strongly recommends increased funding for the protection of lands next to and within cities, villages and town centers which encompass important scenic, ecological, agricultural or cultural resources, present public recreation opportunities and prevent sprawling development patterns. Supporting community gardens, urban green spaces, and access to waterfront lands and the Hudson and Delaware Rivers is critical for urban communities. Increased emphasis in this area will help accomplish the goal of universal access to the outdoors, by providing new open space opportunities in the cities of Region 3, which contain the majority of the region's residents who are underserved in terms of parkland and open space, among other needs.
- c. Protect the Hudson Valley and New York City's Foodshed. Region 3 strongly recommends increased funding for the protection of working farms. Hudson Valley and Catskill farms maintain our scenic working landscapes, rural heritage and quality of life, all of which help drive a multibillion-dollar tourism industry and fuel greener economic growth. Conserved farms safeguard wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas such as meadows, woodlands, wetlands and streams. They also protect local aquifers and other drinking-water supplies and

reduce cost of services for municipalities. There are 5,387 farms comprising 730,389 of significant farmland in the 11-county regional foodshed, but only 11 percent—81,430 acres—has been conserved to date. Hence, 648,959 acres of important farmland, on 4,969 farms, remains at risk.

- d. Protect Drinking Water Sources. The quality and quantity of surface and drinking water remains the most basic necessity for all life. Protecting lands to filter and safely store and transport this critical resource should be a fundamental and overriding goal. Riparian and wetland buffers are also essential. In light of Tropical storms Irene and Lee, and Super Storm Sandy, protected lands are increasingly understood as being a necessary component of the infrastructure required to conserve this resource in perpetuity.
  - e. Provide Stewardship on State-Owned Land. Our public lands possess important qualities that must be actively managed and cared for so that they can continue to provide public benefits.
  - f. Promote Public Access to Protected Landscapes and Waterways. Public access is critical to the quality of life and health of all New Yorkers as well as the state's economy. Protected land provides opportunities for hiking, biking, camping, fishing, hunting, bird watching and appreciating nature and history, and is vital to the Hudson Valley's \$4 billion annual tourism economy.
2. Conservation Lands Owned by Not-for-Profits Must Remain Tax Exempt. From time-to-time, legislative proposals are made which would restrict or do away with the right of non-profit conservation organizations to secure a tax exemption for conservation lands that they own. This exemption enables small land trusts and other conservation and historic preservation groups to own protected land for the public benefit that they would not otherwise be able to afford. Additionally, the economic value of land conserved for public benefit has been well established in numerous studies.
  3. Conservation Easement Tax Credit and Conservation Donor Tax Credit. The Committee strongly supports continuation of the laws which provide incentives to landowners who are considering voluntary private land conservation. A principal of the Open Space Plan is that it is neither practical nor desirable to purchase all land that merits protection. Only through voluntary private land conservation will other significant open space resources be preserved.
  4. Consider Making the Existing Conservation Easement Tax Credit Transferable. Establishing a market-based trade system for tax credits relating to conservation easements has significantly increased the pace of conservation in other states and should be considered for New York.

5. Support Enabling Authority for Local Government to Protect Open Space and Working Farmland, and Create Parks. The Committee strongly supports Community Preservation Act legislation that enables cities, towns and villages in New York State to impose a real-estate transfer fee of up to two percent on the sale price of real property to fund the protection and management of open space. The state should consider giving discretion to communities to diversify the use of funds to include affordable housing, historic preservation, and property tax relief in conjunction with open space preservation and farmland preservation. The state should also incentivize local communities to contribute to open space and farmland protection projects by providing preferential treatment for state grant applicants working in communities where local funding for open space has been generated.
6. Support for Municipalities Seeking to Protect Natural Resources and Open Space through the Water Improvement District program. Under chapter law 378 of 2012, local governments are permitted to establish and extend watershed protection districts under a mechanism similar to creating special lighting or sewer districts. In the case of watershed improvement, the district allows protection of specific natural resources related to water quality. The Committee encourages promotion of this new tool.
7. Provide Low-Interest Loans for Not-for-Profits and Municipalities to Protect Open Space and Working Farmland. The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), in collaboration with the DEC, may provide low-interest loans to municipalities and land trusts to protect lands that are critical to surface and drinking water quality. The Committee appreciates recent changes in the scoring of projects that enable open space protection to compete more readily with traditional water and wastewater infrastructure. The EFC should consider funding open space and farmland protection projects as a parallel, non-competing funding program to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for traditional infrastructure projects, with its own dedicated funding source. The state should also consider providing direct grants to support these projects given the permanent benefits of protecting land critical to water quality.
8. Revise the 480-a program. There is a strong need to create economic incentives for land to remain under sustained forestry management programs. The New York State 480-a program offers landowners forestry tax benefits. However, because the remaining taxpayers have to pick up the costs of any tax benefits given to woodlot owners, the burden of this program is squarely upon municipalities, and thus does not encourage local governments to promote the program. The Committee supports amending the program to spread the costs associated with implementation across multiple jurisdictions.

### **GENERAL PLANNING, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

9. **SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS.** Through robust grass-roots planning initiatives New York State has drafted



Regional Sustainability Plans and Regional Economic Development Strategies in each of ten regions. Here in the “Mid Hudson Region” these plans reference the importance of natural resources, particularly strategic open space and farmland/forestland protection initiatives.

These Plans also help address a recurring, public policy failure of inter-agency “concurrency” or consistency of plans and of all plans for capital projects between and among municipalities (including counties) and/or state governmental agencies. NYS statutes related to the adoption of comprehensive plans by municipalities note that the effect of adoption includes “All land acquisitions and public improvements, including those identified in the official map ... shall be in accordance with a ...comprehensive plan , if one exists.” And “All plans for capital projects of a municipality or state governmental agency on land included in the comprehensive plan .... shall take such plan into consideration.”

10. SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL NATURAL RESOURCE BASED TOURISM. Communities with substantial acreages of public land depend on natural resource based tourism as one of the drivers for economic vitality. The Open Space Plan in New York State should look for ways these open spaces can be integrated with tourism strategies such as the I Love NY Program and the Path Through History initiative. A strong commitment to marketing and promotion, strategic planning, staffing, maintenance of recreational infrastructure and unified signage is required. More than a list of priority projects for acquisition, the Open Space Plan should also serve as a blueprint for economic integration for lands after they are protected. Sportsmen and sportswomen should be provided continued access to waterways and landscape-scale hunting and fishing grounds, activities which are complementary to resource management goals.
  
11. SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL BLUEWAY AND WATER TRAIL DESIGNATIONS FOR THE UPPER DELAWARE CORRIDOR AND HUDSON RIVER. The Department of Interior has initiated the National Blueways Program that could bring attention to waterways in Region 3 and increase their competitiveness for federal resources. In addition, water trails and state water trail designations offer a unique opportunity for communities on both rivers to revitalize their waterfronts and facilitate a new wave of tourism and outdoor recreation-related economic development.
  
12. SUPPORT FEDERAL PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE FUNDING FOR OPEN SPACE PROTECTION. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Fund, the Highlands Conservation Act and the Agricultural Land Easement Programs in the Farm Bill are federal matching fund programs that are critical to help state conservation go further. These programs should be supported. The Highlands Conservation Act expires in 2014, and must be reauthorized by Congress. Passage of reauthorization legislation should be a priority for New York State.  
The Committee wishes to support the federal Forest Legacy Program, and recommends that the Shawangunk Mountains, from New Jersey to Rosendale, NY be designated as a

Forest Legacy area. The US Forest Service’s Forest Legacy program is designed to protect “working forests” that protect water quality, provide habitat, forest products, outdoor recreation and other public benefits. The program supports state efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands that are threatened by development and fragmentation. The Shawangunks meet the criteria for Forest Legacy designation due to the presence of a globally significant forest matrix block, sensitivity of the forest resources and the potential impacts on those resources by development and fragmentation.

In addition, the Committee also supports the Pittman–Robertson Act and Dingle–Johnson Act funding, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Program, the Franklin–Delano Roosevelt and Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, and efforts to support the Appalachian Trail in New York State.

13. **SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A FEDERAL HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN FOR THE HUDSON ESTUARY.** New York State and the Army Corps of Engineers are considering developing a federal habitat restoration plan for the Hudson Estuary. When complete, the plan will provide a context for prioritizing habitat, protection, restoration and management projects within the tidal reaches of the Hudson River.
14. **ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.** The protection of wetlands and forests is now recognized as an essential component of a plan to mitigate climate change and provide migration corridors as habitats shift. Region 3 strongly recommends increased funding for protection of wetlands and working forests which function as storm damage and flood mitigators and as carbon sequestration areas. As recommended in the NYS 2100 Commission Report and the Mid Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan, the Committee strongly advocates using green infrastructure to reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events.
15. **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.** Supporting community gardens, urban green spaces, and access to waterfront lands and the Hudson River provides healthy recreational opportunities for urban communities both within and near Region 3, including New York City and its suburbs. For example public and private conservation of lands adjacent to the Bluestone Wild Forest in Ulster County will expand on a cherished natural and recreational landscape just minutes from the City of Kingston. Affordable public transportation from densely populated areas to public lands should be available to all New Yorkers. Further, the fresh food crisis in these urban areas can be reversed with attention to the Region 3 agricultural landscape, particularly community–supported agriculture, protection of farmland, and regional farm–to–market programs. Environmental education is exemplified by the Hudson River Estuary Program at DEC’s Region 3.
16. **Linking Conservation and Development Issues:** Municipalities, including Counties, are enabled by NYS statute to prepare comprehensive plans and other strategic plans

including greenway compacts, local waterfront revitalization plans, agriculture and farmland protection plans etc. These Plans need to be kept up-to-date and complementary. They should also be consistent with the Open Space Plan by articulating open space needs and the interdependent relationships between development and conservation issues, such as need for more compact development to protect open space and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as well as need for communities to accommodate density to achieve environmental and socio-economic goals. “Smart growth” is a land management approach directing development away from ecologically sensitive lands while enhancing existing human centers served by quality infrastructure. State open space policies should support and be consistent with municipal and county policies that promote greater attention to the interdependency of open space and developed areas. The value of recreation, agriculture, forestry, and cultural resources should be recognized in relation to natural resources, including their role in economic development.

**E. STEWARDSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS (2006 CHAPTER VII)**

**Maintain Park Infrastructure and Staffing.** Continued maintenance of state park infrastructure and staffing is essential to ensure that these nationally historic public spaces are safe and available to those residents and visitors who rely on public lands for recreation and health.

Stewardship of protected lands is critical to ensuring the long-term success of New York's open space protection efforts. Stewardship of state and federal lands continues to be vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the economy. This committee recommends strong and consistent funding allocated to monitoring and maintaining public lands so that what has been protected is not compromised by violations in use or deterioration of natural assets.

Private not-for-profit land trusts play a tremendously important role in open space protection. Obligated to annually monitor all protected lands, land trusts provide a professional, trained stewardship service for the public benefit. When a municipality lacks the resources to adequately steward its conservation easements, such stewardship can be entrusted to professional land trusts, whose continuity, capacity, technical expertise, staffing, and record-keeping are often as robust as that of the local government. State funding for such stewardship will ensure that such properties will continue to be protected, properly tracked and documented.

**CAPITAL DISTRICT – REGION 4  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
COUNTIES**

ALBANY, COLUMBIA, DELAWARE, GREENE, MONTGOMERY,  
OTSEGO, RENSSELAER, SCHENECTADY, SCHOHARIE

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES**

## REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS

---

Mark Fitzsimmons, Co-Chairman	Albany County
Patrick Grattan	Columbia County
Jim Thomson	Delaware County
Ed Diamante	Greene County
Paul Orzolek	Montgomery County
Harold Palmer	Otsego County
Hon. Judith Bresselor	Rensselaer County
Mary Werner	Schenectady County
Carl Stefanik	Schoharie County

### COMMISSIONERS' APPOINTEES

Mark King, Co-Chairman	The Nature Conservancy – Eastern NY Chapter
Tim Barnard	Region 4 Fish & Wildlife Management Board
Kelly Boling	Scenic Hudson, Inc.
Jim Bonesteel	Rensselaer Plateau Alliance
Tony Colyer-Pendes	Columbia Land Conservancy
Martin Daley	Parks & Trails New York
Virginia Kennedy	Otsego Land Trust
Katie Petronis	Open Space Institute
Alan White	Catskill Center for Conservation & Development
Neil Woodworth	Adirondack Mountain Club

### Staff Contacts and Affiliated Agency Representatives:

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Peter Innes, Region 4 Natural Resources Supervisor

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Alane Ball-Chinian, Saratoga-Capital District Regional Director

New York City Department of Environmental Protection  
Paul Lenz, Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission  
Chris Hawver, Executive Director

Hudson Valley Greenway Conservancy  
Scott Keller/Mark Castiglione

### MEETINGS

February 12, 2013; March 5, 2013; April 15, 2013; April 25, 2013

### INTRODUCTION

This current revision to the original New York State Open Space Conservation Plan represents the sixth successive update since the Plan was first completed in 1992. Each update reflected the

concerted efforts of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), in addition to the contribution of the nine Regional Advisory Committees established to provide a local perspective on open space conservation priorities and policies.

The contribution of open space conservation to the protection of working forests, farmland, biodiversity, water resources, and historic sites has been the hallmark of the State Open Space Conservation Plan since its inception. Furthermore, the importance of open space protection to economic development, agricultural viability, outdoor recreation, tourism, and promoting healthy lifestyles has never been more recognized. However, due to recent events, we have now come to understand open space as critical to protecting waterfront communities and infrastructure, particularly as it can dissipate the energies of storm surges and floods. Given all of the above, it is no surprise that the Capital District Regional Economic Development Council has recognized the Hudson Valley's natural resources and waterfronts as significant assets. The same certainly holds true for the natural and cultural attributes of the remainder of the nine counties comprising Region 4.

The following report, which presents the most recent perspective of the Region 4 Advisory Committee, includes an overview of the criteria established by the Committee for determining priorities and brief descriptions of the current list of recommendations for open space protection in Region 4. It should be noted that open space priorities are presented alphabetically and not according to rank or importance value. Finally, as with previous years, the Committee has given careful consideration to both previously proposed and newly formulated Policy Recommendations that address the framework of open space protection in our state.

### **OPEN SPACE PRIORITY CRITERIA**

The following criteria were applied by the Committee to the evaluation of open space areas in Region 4 and determination of priorities for protection. While most of these criteria remain the same as those applied in previous reports; however, two new criteria were added to this current update to reflect the importance of open space to regional and local economic viability and our region's ability to adapt to climate change.

- Preserves the Region's ecological diversity with emphasis on defining and measuring an area's biological diversity when evaluating priorities for protection.
- Ensures the quality of the Region's water resources by protecting surface waters, aquifers, and associated watershed and recharge areas.
- Preserves the heritage of the Region by protecting our cultural resources including, but not limited to, areas of historic and archaeological significance.
- Protects working landscapes including, but not limited to, farmland and forests.
- Provides or enhances public access to the Region's waterways and water bodies.
- Provides or enhances access to State holdings including, but not limited to, Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Reforestation Areas, Multiple-use Areas, and Forest Preserve lands.

- Preserves the heritage value associated with historic uses of our natural resources including fishing, hunting, and trapping.
- Consolidates and connects public land such as State Wildlife Management Areas, Reforestation Areas, NYC public water supply watershed lands, and other protected open space, which could include lands owned or controlled by other levels of government, not-for-profit organizations, or educational institutions.
- Considers the current level of threat or vulnerability in terms of imminent sale, subdivision, development, or other consequence that would limit or preclude efforts to protect an open space area.
- Considers previous protection efforts and commitments of public and/or private funds that have resulted in only partial protection of a given area for which full protection is justified.
- Provides adaptation and resiliency to climate change, including protection from sea level rise and extreme weather events and subsequent flooding.
- Promotes regional and local economic development and revitalization through enhanced recreational opportunities, including protection of trail and greenway corridors and improved access to existing open space.

### CAPITAL DISTRICT FUNDING & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enhancement of Public Lands**

The need for enhancement of public lands, which includes enhanced access provisions, as well as securing inholdings or parcels adjacent to public lands, is addressed in the 2009 NYS Open Space Conservation Plan as a subcategory of Statewide Small Projects (Statewide Priority Project #135). Unfortunately, circumstances may arise when the availability and/or vulnerability of an important parcel represents a unique enhancement opportunity, but because of "Small Project" limits placed on land area (200 acres) and cost (\$250,000), such an opportunity may be lost. The Region 4 Committee, therefore, recommends that Enhancement of Public Lands be considered distinct from Statewide Small Projects, much the same as State Park and State Historic Site Protection (#132) is considered separate from the Small Projects category.

- **Funding for Small Projects**

The State established a "Statewide Small Projects" category for small-scale acquisition projects that provide access to State lands and waterways; buffer or consolidate State holdings; link trails and greenways; or protect significant habitats or historic sites. Despite the obvious importance of this project category, funding support is clearly insufficient. In a previous update of the Region 4 Plan, it was estimated that it would take 12–15 years to acquire the parcels on DEC Region 4's Small Project list under the current level of funding at the time. Furthermore, given the increase in property values over the last few years without commensurate increase in the dollar cap placed on small projects, that unacceptable rate of progress has probably worsened. Therefore, the Committee continues to urge the State to increase the level of funding support for Small Projects and to give consideration to increasing the \$250,000 cap established for small project status to a level reflecting current property valuation.

- **Support for Not-for-Profit Parks and Trails Organizations**

Chapter VI of the 2009 Open Space Plan (p. 125) addresses the importance of providing support to land trusts by creating the New York State Conservation Partnership. This partnership is an EPF-funded grant program jointly administered by the Land Trust Alliance and DEC that provides competitive matching grants and technical assistance to local and regional land trusts. While the Committee strongly supports this program, we also recognize that a number of not-for-profit parks and trails organizations play a critical role in land conservation by developing and managing trails and other public recreational resources. In recognition of this significant contribution, the Committee recommends that the concept of the NYS Conservation Partnership be expanded to include a similar EPF-funded grant program jointly administered by Parks and Trails New York and OPRHP. This new program would be directed toward enhancing the capability of local and regional parks and trails not-for-profit organizations to continue their efforts, which are frequently performed in concert with local government agencies.

- **Anticipating Land Conservation and Energy Policy Conflicts**

It is important to recognize that current State energy policies, which include exploration, extraction, and transmission of natural gas, as well as emphasize developing alternatives to fossil fuels, may directly conflict with key objectives of the State Open Space Plan. Specific examples of these conflicts include much publicized potential adverse impacts associated with high-volume hydraulic fracturing (hydrofracking) and development of transmission pipelines, but also impact of wind farms on scenic vistas and migratory birds and bats; damming of rivers and streams for hydro power; and depleted soil productivity resulting from monocultures of corn and other biofuel sources. It is, therefore, critical that our compelling need for energy resources be advanced within the context of the conservation goals identified in this Open Space Conservation Plan concurrent with a comprehensive plan toward reduced energy consumption.

- **Protection of Public Water Supplies**

Watersheds, aquifers, and aquifer recharge areas supporting public water supplies should be afforded the same statewide importance value as other significant statewide priority categories such as farmland protection and working forest lands.

- **New Funding Sources for Land Protection**

The importance of open space conservation is clearly demonstrated by the tremendous demand for the State's open space grant programs. It is, therefore, of great importance that new or additional funding for acquisition and stewardship be identified to supplement the current Environmental Protection Fund so that the goals and objectives established in this Open Space Conservation Plan might be achieved.

- **Stewardship**

Whereas the current objectives of the State's Open Space Conservation Plan appear to focus on acquisition, the long-term effectiveness of land protection programming rests on the State's ability to manage its land resources in a manner that retains or enhances the natural, physical, and cultural integrity of the land, as well as provisions for public use. Furthermore, it is of

paramount importance that a comprehensive plan be developed to stabilize and improve stewardship of privately-owned lands that complement the benefits of public lands, as in the case of the mosaic of private and State Forest Preserve lands comprising the Catskill Park. This should include State funding to ensure that private forest owners have the opportunity to work in concert with professional foresters to develop forest management plans that address forest health, sustainable yields, and the long-term viability of their land.

- **Staff-related Funding Support**

The State should allocate sufficient budgetary resources to maintain DEC and OPRHP staffing levels that are commensurate with open space protection activities and stewardship needs. The Committee is sensitive to the constraints of the State's budget; however, it makes no sense to provide land acquisition funds through the EPF and Bond Act programs and not to provide sufficient resources to carry out key functions such as surveying and appraisal work that are prerequisite to protection activities.

- **Payment of Property Taxes on State-owned Land**

The Committee recognizes that several categories of land administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation or Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation are not subject to property tax under present NYS Real Property Law and that this may constitute an undue burden on local communities. The Committee is, therefore, supportive of New York State compensating municipal taxing units for property tax on all lands (including easements) owned or otherwise under the jurisdiction of these agencies. As stated in our first policy recommendation recognizing that an open space program must go beyond acquisition to include provisions for stewardship, such a plan must also include fiscal responsibilities to offset potential impact to a local municipality's tax base resulting from open space preservation activity.

- **Opportunities for Local Projects**

The Committee strongly recommends that the State increase support for its Municipal Grants Acquisition Program to allow for continued and greater implementation of locally important projects. Specifically, it is recommended that the State consider increasing the maximum funding cap as necessary to reflect ever-increasing property values. Furthermore, the current 50 percent State share for the Municipal Grants Acquisition Program should be increased to bring it into line with the 75 percent State share for the Farmland Protection Program. In doing so, the State will allow more modestly endowed communities (both rural and urban) to participate actively in this program.

- **Private Landowner Conservation Programs**

While the Committee strongly supports the continuing need to purchase lands for resource conservation and public recreation, it also recognizes that working with owners of private property, who control 85 percent of land in the State, to conserve their holdings is of critical importance. Therefore, programs such as purchase of development rights (PDR) for farmland and working forests must continue to be given high priority with commensurate funding support. The Committee also recommends establishing conservation tax incentive and cost-share programs to assist landowners willing to make long-term commitments to land protection, stewardship, and working landscapes. This should include consideration of State-funded



incentives such as property tax relief and/or State income tax credits granted to landowners for conservation easements on their property.

- **Reform of Forest Taxation Policies**

The current Forest Tax Law requirements for a commercial forestry objective, including mandated work schedules and strict penalties, are viewed by landowners as excessive barriers resulting in low participation. Certain aspects of this law also create negative fiscal impacts for municipalities and heavy reliance on State staffing for forestry program supervision and administration. It is important that the State undertake comprehensive reform of the Forest Tax Law to address these concerns and to expand eligibility for wetlands and other non-forested open space. Such reform would not only increase enrollment in the program, but also make private forests more sustainable as open space.

- **Traditional Uses on State-funded Acquisition Land**

The Committee recommends that traditional uses of properties including hunting, fishing, trapping, and hiking be afforded equal consideration to other recreational pursuits when developing management and use plans for new State-funded acquisitions.

- **Enhanced Public Use and Access to Catskill Preserve and NYC Watershed Land**

Communities with substantial acreages of public land and dedicated open space are often compromised by a reduced property tax base and restricted economic development potential. This is particularly true in the Catskills given strict land use restrictions imposed by the “forever wild” provisions of the NYS Forest Preserve and New York City watershed rules and regulations. As a result, Catskill communities frequently depend on natural resource-based tourism as one of the drivers for economic vitality. This, in turn, requires jurisdictions that protect such land to take responsibilities for investing in enhanced public use opportunities and improved access to open space. The NYS Open Space Plan and the state open space planning process in general should, therefore, integrate open space protection with natural resource-based tourism by including a strong commitment to marketing and promotion, strategic planning, and staffing to meet the needs of local communities. In addition, attention to development and maintenance of recreational infrastructure, such as parking, multi-purpose trails, overlooks, and unified signage, should be incorporated into Unit Management Plans, the Catskill Park Access Plan, and related documents.

**EASTERN ADIRONDACKS & LAKE CHAMPLAIN – REGION 5  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
COUNTIES**

CLINTON, ESSEX, FRANKLIN, FULTON, HAMILTON, SARATOGA, WARREN, WASHINGTON

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Rodney Brown (Michael Zurlo).....Clinton County  
George Canon (Ron Moore).....Essex County  
Tim Burpoe (Paul Maroun) .....Franklin County  
Ralph Ottusco (Rick Argotsinger\*).....Fulton County

Brian Towers (Brian Welles*)	Hamilton County
Julie Stokes (Pieter Litchfield*)	Saratoga County
Ralph Bentley (Frank Thomas*)	Warren County
Robert Banks	Washington County
Diane Fish (Rocci Aquirre*)	Adirondack Council
David Gibson (Dan Plumley*)	Adirondack Wild
Ross Whaley	Adirondack Landowners Association
Roger Dziengeleski	Independent Appointee
Duane Ricketson	Independent Appointee
Neil Woodworth (Allison Beals*)	Adirondack Mountain Club
Teri Ptacek (Renee Boulon*)	Agricultural Stewardship Association
Zoe Smith	Wildlife Conservation Society

\* Indicates alternate representative

**MEETINGS**

January 25, 2013; February 22, 2013; March 22, 2013; May 3, 2013 and May 24, 2013

**II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

DEC Region 5 is the most diverse DEC Region in NYS. The unique and distinct resources, biological diversity and open space character of the Region are of national and international significance. It is the largest at 6.2 million acres, contains approximately 75% of the Adirondack Park, and ranges in elevation from 5,344 feet at the state’s high point of Mount Marcy to 95 feet on the shores of Lake Champlain. The Region contains the majority of wilderness lands and other forest preserve lands managed by DEC, as well as agricultural lands, working forests and other open space in fast growing counties such as Saratoga. The Region is blessed with vast water resources including approximately 3,400 lakes and ponds and 856 miles in the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Program. Within Region 5 there are eight counties, six cities, 36 villages and 117 towns. The 2010 U.S. Census reports a population of 581,994 people.

Inside the Adirondack Park, DEC Region 5 manages nearly 2 million acres of forest preserve; 493,470 acres of conservation easement lands; 14,720 acres of state forest; and 2,970 acres in wildlife management areas. In the remaining 25% of the Region outside the Park, DEC manages 43,370 acres of state forest, 23,500 acres of conservation easement lands, 3,680 acres of wildlife management areas, and 1,480 acres of detached forest preserve. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation manages 9,100 acres of land in DEC’s Region 5. The majority of those lands are located in five State Parks; Cumberland Bay, Macomb Reservation and Point Au Roche in Clinton County and Moreau Lake and Saratoga Spa in Saratoga County. Other open space lands are protected by Land Trusts, Municipal Governments, private landowners and the federal government who manages the 3,400-acre Saratoga Battlefield National Park.

Because of the mixture of public and private lands within the Region, and the large ownership of lands by New York State, ensuring that the needs of communities are met is an important consideration in Open Space Conservation Planning.

Over the past 20 or more years, the Region 5 Open Space Advisory Committee (Committee) has reviewed a number of contentious issues associated with Open Space Conservation Planning. Committee recommendations embodied in this report attempt to reconcile these issues, including property taxes, eminent domain policies, sustaining agriculture, public access to state lands, detached parcels, consultation with local government concerning acquisition projects, and others. Recommendations were developed following intensive study and discussion. They reflect a consensus of the Committee and serve as the foundation for continued deliberations. Many of these recommendations are carried over from previous reports because they reflect issues and policies that the Committee still feels strongly about and believes deserve continued attention.

### **Principles Developed by the Committee for Open Space Conservation**

The open space conservation policies of the Committee are based on the following principles.

1. The majority of the region's open space consists of both public and private lands. While the State Forest Preserve lands are constitutionally protected, the private lands within the region presently dedicated to forest management, agricultural and open space recreation, such as lands classified as Resource Management, should largely remain dedicated to such uses.
2. Open space conservation can only be accomplished through the efforts of, and partnerships between, State agencies, local governments, non-government organizations and private landowners. Local planning and private landowner stewardship are important components of open space conservation throughout the state. New York State and its agencies must enact laws, regulation and policy that support the development and updating of local planning, zoning, land-use regulation, recreational planning, property tax laws and other mechanisms that encourage open space conservation on private lands.
3. Balance open space conservation with sustainable communities. Future land acquisition and open space conservation should be consistent with the social, recreational and economic requirements of maintaining vibrant communities while preserving sensitive natural areas, productive forests and farms. Consider both the economic impacts that land use regulations and open space protection of public and private lands have on local communities, especially within the Adirondack Park.
4. Protection of habitats of "species of greatest conservation need" is of critical concern and may require a variety of management strategies, and therefore should explore appropriate landownership patterns including but not limited to, conservation easements, fee acquisition by the State from willing sellers, and partnerships with landowner.
5. To ensure that eminent domain will never be employed to achieve any of the objectives of the State's Open Space Conservation Plan, the State will only acquire land, interest in land, and improvements on land for open space conservation purposes offered for sale by a willing seller.

### **II. POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

Committee requests that DEC and OPHRP provide feedback on the recommendations that follow, indicating whether a recommendation has been accepted or if not why it wasn't accept.

**A. Region 5 Open Space Conservation Advisory Committee**

The Committee wishes to remain in existence and meet on a regular basis between updates to the New York State Open Space Conservation plan to discuss the many and varied issues related to open space conservation, both in the region and statewide, and to provide recommendations to DEC and OPHRP on these issues. DEC and OPHRP should appoint members to the Committee to assure representation of all interests related to open space conservation including but not limited to environmental protection, forest industry, private landowners, agriculture and economic development.

(Additional discussion and specific recommendations on this issue can be found page 185 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the headings: *A. Continuation of Region 5 Open Space Conservation Advisory Committee and B. Representatives on the Region 5 Committee*)

**B. Taxes on State Land**

Any land acquisition or easement plan should include an ongoing commitment by the State to continue to pay real property taxes on existing and newly acquired lands within the Forest Preserve on the same basis as currently applied. This should be confirmed by the legislation which establishes funding for any acquisition program. On the assumption that local assessments on State lands are fair and equitable compared to assessments for similar open space private lands, the State should not attempt to place an arbitrary cap on these payments. A resolution requesting an amendment to the State Real Property Tax Law that would help ensure continued State payment of taxes for Forest Preserve lands was authored by the Committee.

The Committee supports the amendment of Real Property Tax law Section 532 to add a new subsection (h) as follows: "532(h) No law repealing or amending subsection (a) hereof, shall be effective unless enacted by the legislature at two successive regular sessions by a two-thirds vote of the Senate and the Assembly." (See the Committee's full resolution on page 180 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan: *C. An Amendment to the State Real Property Tax Law addition Additional Protection to Ensure State Payment of Taxes for Forest Preserve Lands*)

The Committee recommends the State pay property taxes for all lands held by DEC and OPRHP in Region 5.

**C. Timber Tax Exemption Programs**

The need for improvements to the State's forest tax law program has long been recognized as a critical factor in enabling the stewardship of private forest lands and protecting open space. Failure to take significant steps to address this issue is a considerable challenge to open space conservation efforts on private lands.

The Committee recognizes that sustainable timberlands are an important component of open space and the economy of New York State. The incentive to conduct sustainable management of forests is in part tied to the cost of ownership of which property taxes are a large component. Managing lands for forestry but taxing the lands at ad valorem rates that assess the land's value at its highest and best use places considerable pressure on landowners to subdivide or develop their lands.

The forest tax law was designed to address this disparity of current use (open space) and highest and best use valuation by reducing landowner's tax burden in exchange for a commitment of long term forest stewardship. The program is intended to keep lands in forests and open space and provide forest products to the marketplace. However, the deficiencies of the State's 'forest tax' law have been recognized for decades and have yet to be fully addressed despite repeated attempts. The ineffectiveness of the forest tax law has reduced the ability of landowners to hold and manage forest lands. This has resulted not only in the loss of open space but has increased the costs to the State to protect open space. Lands that could have remained open space as working forests under private ownership have been purchased in fee or easement at significant costs to the State and its taxpayers.

The Committee requests that the State act now to fix the forest tax law (Section 480 and 480a of the Real Property Tax Law) by creating a comprehensive and effective program that taxes forest lands at current use rates (consistent with sustainable forestry values) using the following strategies:

- Simplify State oversight responsibilities. Consider using forest certification programs as a surrogate for state approved plans;
- Include certain other undeveloped open space lands, such as wetlands, shorelines and wildlife habitat which are not exclusively devoted to forest management purposes;
- Encourage more private landowners to convey conservation easements through targeted inducements under the State's income tax laws, including income tax credits for donations of conservation easements and for real estate taxes paid on lands protected by such easements;
- Ensure any program is revenue neutral to municipalities; and
- Maintain a balanced program of tax benefits and landowner accountability that incentivizes long term sound stewardship of private forest lands.

(Previous recommendations on this matter and additional discussion can be found on pages 179 & 180 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the following headings: *B. Recommendations Regarding Timber Tax Exemption Programs*; *D. An Expansion of the State's Existing Forest Tax Abatement Program*; and *G. Need for State legislation to preserve open space and promote sound resource management on private lands in the Adirondacks.*)

**D. Amendment to the Forest Legacy Program**

For any Federal Forest Legacy acquisitions in the Adirondack Park, the title to the property should be structured in such a way that it is acceptable to local communities.

**E. State Will Only Purchase Lands for Open Space Conservation from Willing Sellers**

The record demonstrates that the State can achieve the purposes of its Open Space Conservation Plan without resort to compulsory proceedings under the eminent domain law. For that reason, the Committee believes it is now appropriate to eliminate the previously approved conditional constraints on the use of eminent domain in the Plan and to replace them with a simple, broad and unconditional requirement that the State will acquire land, interests in land, and improvements on land for open space conservation purposes only from willing sellers.

In making this recommendation, it is the Committee's intent to extend and strengthen the limited protection afforded to residents and landowners within Region 5 by the current conditional constraints on eminent domain; and to ensure that eminent domain will never be employed to achieve any of the objectives of the State's Open Space Conservation Plan within Region 5 other than to quiet title to property offered for sale by a willing seller.

(Additional discussion on this issue can be found on pages 181 and 182 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the heading: *G. Recommendation to replace conditional restrictions on the use of eminent domain in the State's Open Space Plan with unconditional "willing seller" requirement.*)

**F. Conservation of Agricultural Lands**

It shall be the policy of all state agencies to encourage the maintenance of viable farming (Article 25AA of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, Section 305(3)). NYS should focus attention and resources in DEC Region 5 on the protection of agricultural lands for working farms – in proportion to the protection of working forest lands Existing farmland under consideration should be protected by the purchase of an easement rather than fee simple acquisition in order to enhance future use of the land for agriculture.

(Additional discussion and specific recommendations on this issue can be found on pages 182 and 183 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the heading: *I. Framework for Agricultural Recommendations*)

**G. Public Access to State Lands**

The Committee recommends a cooperative effort involving all interested parties as part of any State Land Master Plan Amendment, land classification and unit management plan processes to preserve and/or enhance the existing level of motorized and non-motorized access to and use of state lands while balancing the needs of natural resource protection.

**H. Sale or Exchanges of Small Detached Parcels of Existing Forest Preserve Lands**

The State now owns many small, isolated tracts of Forest Preserve land presently under DEC jurisdiction within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks that may serve little public value, and, in some instances, impose a management burden upon the State or municipalities. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the status of all small, detached parcels of Forest Preserve lands within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks be evaluated to determine the public value whether or not these isolated parcels should be offered for sale or exchange through a public process.

**I. Recreational Trail Linkages & Networks**

The Committee recommends the continuation of a region-wide process that will result in a plan that identifies new or existing trails that need to be protected or established through the use of easement, fee title acquisition and other conservation tools from willing sellers. The Committee recognizes the importance of locally based recreational coalitions as partners with the State in developing and maintaining local community trails and connecting them to state trails.

The Committee recommends that DEC and OPRHP develop an effective plan to adequately maintain and regulate such trails and to protect adjacent private landowners from illegal trespass, poaching, and other nuisances resulting from the inappropriate use of such trails. The Committee believes the establishment of a special category of funding to support these efforts is appropriate.

**J. A Balanced Approach To Open Space Conservation In Region 5**

The Committee recognizes that there are a variety of economic costs and benefits resulting from an open space conservation plan. A balanced open space conservation plan must include public and private components which strengthen the forest products and agricultural industries, enhance recreational access and aesthetic values on which the tourism industry depends, emphasizes the importance of ecosystem services like clean water and fresh air, and respects the economic needs of local communities.

When acquiring land or interest in land in Region 5, the State, in consultation with local governments, must consider the variety of factors related to short and long-term positive and negative impacts.

(Additional discussion and specific criteria can be found on pages 187 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the headings: *D. A Balanced Approach to Open Space Conservation In Region 5.*)

**K. Local Government Involvement with Open Space Conservation**

The Committee agrees to consult appropriate local governments prior to making Committee recommendations with respect to land areas to be considered for acquisition

in fee or easement under the State Open Space Conservation Plan and to notify local governments in writing when an open space project has been proposed that includes land within their municipality.

The State should continue to provide assistance and funding to local governments and organizations that undertake local open space conservation planning and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans for conservation and recreation. Local open space conservation efforts can include purchase of fee or easement, local zoning regulations and incentive programs such as current use tax abatement.

(Additional discussion and specific criteria can be found on pages 187, 188 and 189 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the heading: *D. A Balanced Approach to Open Space Conservation In Region 5; E. Consultations with Local Governments on Priority Open Space Projects; F. Method for Implementation of the 9/20/91 Committee Resolution (Recommendation "E") on Consultation with Local Governments; and G. Lands Outside the Blue Line.*)

**L. Achieving Balance Between Open Space Conservation and Community Growth**

State land purchases for open space conservation, whether in fee or easement, can significantly reduce the potential for private development by extinguishing or reserving development rights in communities in which those lands are located, especially within the Adirondack Park. Legal mechanism and programs must be established to preserve the capacity of communities to grow and develop in the future, mechanisms and tools must be established to provide for sustainable and economically viable communities. The Committee recommends new programs be developed and implemented to help achieve balance between open space conservation and community growth.

Note that expanded opportunities for new development in appropriate locations would help to keep property tax rates in check as costs of providing local government services increase. It is the fundamental belief of the committee that the potential for future development does not have to be compromised in open space protection and that various tools can be implemented to provide balance between open space conservation and community growth. The Committee will research this issue and provide detailed suggestions for the legal mechanisms and programs needed to implement this recommendation within the next year. The legal mechanism to be proposed may include but will not be limited to transfer development rights, building rights bank and density bonus programs.

(Additional discussion can be found on page 179 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under *Principle 5. Use of building rights to balance interests of open space protection and ability of communities to develop.*)



**M. Open Space Conservation of Private Lands**

The Committee recommends that the Open Space Plan incorporate a wide range of open space conservation methodologies and funding strategies, including strategies that encourage and support good stewardship of open space by private landowners. Private open space lands are under increasing pressure due to the high value of land for subdivision or development compared to the value the lands provide through timber or agriculture and real property tax costs; both of which are aggravated by the increased interest in second home development in backcountry or ‘exurban’ areas in Region 5. These pressures encourage fragmentation and development of those lands, and undermine the objectives of the State’s Open Space Plan. It affects non-commercial lands as well as those dedicated to forestry and agriculture.

The Committee encourages communities with land use laws to update their comprehensive plans and current zoning and sub-division laws to include modern conservation design standards, guidelines and ideals. The main goal of land use laws should be to maintain open space in a manner that promotes: continuation of timber and agriculture practices; enhances various recreational opportunities; protects wildlife habitat and travel corridors; minimizes negative wildlife/human interactions; and protects riparian buffers and wetlands to reduce the impacts of storms and flooding. Land use laws that require clustered development will reduce the amount of bridges, culverts, roads, sewer lines, water lines and power lines which will lower the infrastructure costs for the developer, utility providers and the municipality. Ensuring infrastructure is properly designed and installed to endure flooding and other natural disasters will further reduce the costs to taxpayers.

**N. Easements**

Conservation easements should be the predominant method of acquiring a State interest in private lands, and fee purchase, when under consideration, should be the subject of a detailed written justification. The State should first consider whether an easement could fulfill the purposes for which the particular acquisition is sought. If an easement would fulfill such purpose, then DEC or the Office should use its best efforts to acquire an easement to achieve the objective of the acquisition, wherever practicable.

The Committee favors the acquisition of conservation easements on lands which include productive agricultural or forest lands currently dedicated or suitable for dedication to sound management. Easement agreements should be crafted to allow such practices to continue.

The State must continue to provide the resources needed to properly administer all of their easements, including but not limited to inventorying, monitoring, stewardship, raising public awareness and enforcing easement provisions.

(Additional discussion and specific recommendations can be found on pages 189 and 190 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the heading: *H. Easements.*)

**O. Consistent Open Space Conservation Policies for Adirondack Park Lands**

The Region 5 and 6 Open Space Conservation Advisory Committees recommend that the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan treat the entire Adirondack Park as a Planning Unit for purposes of the Plan, and that efforts be made to have the committees meet together annually for discussion on how best to implement this recommendation. All policies in the Plan, such as those regarding the use of Eminent Domain, economic impact of acquisitions, taxation policies, etc. shall be Park wide policies. Furthermore strategies for protecting critical environmental areas, such as wildlife migration corridors, at a Park-wide level should be discussed among Regions 5 & 6. At all times the incremental and cumulative impact of the Plan will be considered Park-wide.

(The Committees' full resolution can be found on page 191 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the heading: *J. Consistent Open Space Conservation Policies for Adirondack Park Lands in DEC Regions 5 & 6*)

**P. State Purchase of Tax Sale Properties**

At the tax sale of Adirondack private lands, the State of New York should not have the right to acquire such lands for the taxes due. The Committee hereby recommends the current provision of law be amended to provide that the State be required to pay fair market value for any parcels proposed for purchase.

**Q. Full appropriation of the Environmental Protection Fund**

The Committee urges the Governor and the Legislature to fully appropriate funding for the Environmental Protection Fund to enable the implementation of the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan.

**R. Annual Report Documenting All Open Space Conservation Successes**

The Committee recommends that in conjunction with a 3-year revision of the Open Space Plan the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation prepare an annual summary of accomplishments documenting all open space conservation efforts undertaken in a given year, not just acquisitions

**S. Metrics for Measuring Success of NYS Open Space**

The New York State Open Space Conservation Plan sets forth 13 goals, yet provides no mechanism by which the state will evaluate and report on the plan's performance in achieving those goals. The Committee recommends that, for each goal, New York State **adopt, measure and report on a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).**

These indicators are not intended to show cause and affect relationships, but rather to measure whether or not the Plan is “moving the ball” in regards to its stated goals. The act of measuring the plan’s performance will provide an invaluable feedback loop so that the plan can be adjusted as necessary and practicable to address areas where goals are not being met.

Measurements would show annual trends, with 1991 being the baseline year. Averages for the region as well as each county within the region are recommended. KPIs should be taken from readily available data sets either from DEC records or records of partners such as local communities, other state agencies, or private scientific groups, such as universities or conservation groups.

**T. Study of the Long-term Viability of the Commercial Forest and Forest Products Industry**

As New York State’s acquisition in fee or easement of productive, private forestland in the Adirondack Park has increased in recent years, much debate has arisen regarding the impact of these acquisitions on the future viability of the region’s commercial forests and forest products industry. Without the steady wood markets provided by the forest products industry, many forest owners would simply find it financially impossible to maintain their lands as open space.

The Committee recognizes that the current open space plan does not provide for the timber and agriculture industries and recommends a study needs to be undertaken to review, make determinations and recommendations on both the immediate and the long-term health and viability of the timber industry in the Greater Adirondack Region. The study should focus on, but not be limited to:

1. The total acreage of working forest lands on which logging is currently or could potentially occur;
2. The size of the working forest land tracts;
3. The location of working forestland tracts to mills and other end users;
4. The volume of timber currently marketed and to identify potential markets including bio-diversified products, as well as, carbon credits marketed for carbon sequestration, that may exist in the foreseeable future;
5. An estimate of the acreage of sustainable working forest lands required to ensure a viable timber industry;
6. An assessment of the economic impact on the local economy by the elimination of sustainable working forests in our communities; and
7. Ways to retain our wood fiber within the region.

(Additional discussion and more specific recommendations can be found on pages 191, 192 and 193 of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan under the

heading: *L. Study of the Long-term Viability of the Adirondacks' Commercial Forest and R. Health and Viability of the Timber Industry in the Greater Adirondack Region.*)

**U. Recognition and Endorsement of Sustainable Forest Certification Programs**

The Committee recommends that the DEC and OPRHP include the following statement in the Open Space Conservation Plan:

New York State recognizes that the state's private forest owners, both industrial and non-industrial, play an important role in open space conservation. We salute these landowners for their commitment to protecting our forest resource, especially those who participate in Forest certification programs including but not limited to Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, GreenWood, American Tree Farm and others by integrating the reforestation, managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and aesthetics.

Further, the Committee recommends that recognized third party certified plan serves as the management plan required for forest tax abatement programs.

**V. Conservation of Commercial Forest Lands**

USDA Forest Service defines "forest land" as "land that is at least 10% stocked with trees of any size or that formerly had such tree cover and is not currently developed for a non-forest use. The minimum area for classification of forest land is one acre." Further USDA Forest Service defines "timberland" as "forest land producing or capable of producing crops of industrial wood (more than 20 cubic feet per acre per year) and not withdrawn from timber utilization (formerly known commercial forest land)."

It shall be the policy of all state agencies to encourage the maintenance and viability of commercial forest lands. All commercial forest lands under conservation consideration should be protected by the purchase of a conservation easement rather than fee simple acquisition in order to enhance future use of the land for forestry and production of the large variety of forest products used by all New Yorkers. Fee acquisition should be used only for exceedingly unique parcels where extraordinary public values are evident and such acquisitions should be offset by divestitures of non-critical and isolated parcels already in state ownership (see recommendation H). In so doing the agencies shall adopt a policy of no net loss of commercial forest land.

In addition, it shall be the policy of all state agencies to encourage sustainable forest management practices by encouraging participation in and compliance with third party designed sustainable forest standards such as FSC, SFI and the American Tree Farm system. Agencies should encourage such participation by accepting such recognized standards as qualification for entry into programs such as the 480a tax program, or as

qualifying for general and other regulatory efficiencies such as the proposed APA general permit on clear-cutting.

It should be noted that commercial forest lands provide many environmental benefits to New Yorkers at little or no cost including: clean water, greater rates of carbon sequestration, clean air, esthetics, open space, biological diversity, the ability to manage for and protect rare and endangered species, recreation and many others. All at the same time that products are produced and jobs are maintained or created.

Climate change is the most pressing environmental issue of the day and effective use of commercial forests allows for the manufacture and use of biomass (as a by-product of other wood product manufacturing) which decreases the release of carbon from the combustion of fossil fuels.

### **W. Protecting Open Space from Invasive Species**

Invasive species are a serious and ongoing threat to the forests, lakes and all open space in Region 5. Local governments, private land owners and the public landscape are all being impacted, including some of the most unique areas in high elevations, along wetlands, and especially in our streams, rivers and lakes. It is very difficult to control and manage these invasive species for many reasons including: remote locations, limited natural predation, transport by various vectors including humans, cost and difficulties associated with early detection and mitigation.

It is crucial that open space policy recognize the challenges of public acquisitions, especially forest preserve lands which limit or ban actions that may be used to control of invasive species. Such acquisitions also negatively impact adjoining private lands and any efforts to control and manage invasive species there. Open Space policy must incorporate provisions of the New York Invasive Species Law and subsequent regulations being enacted in 2013.

Statutory changes may also be necessary to provide for management in protected areas such as the forest preserve to permit vegetation management required to control and manage invasive species.

The state should commit to both preventing new infestations through things like supporting watershed stewards and monitoring of newly acquired (or easement) lands through long term monitoring programs.

### **X. Protecting Priority Wildlife Linkages**

To sustain healthy populations of wildlife and plant species, both core habitat and landscape connectivity should be protected to allow species to move across the landscape,

provide opportunity for genetic exchange within a species and protect existing biodiversity.

Ideally a landscape would consist of a network of open space that would connect habitats and allow for animals to move freely. Scientists often refer to “permeability” of a landscape as the degree to which landscape features give animals enough cover and security to move around man made obstacles and to safely cross roads to reach suitable habitat to meet their life needs.

The Committee recommends protection of key parcels of forest and farm lands to ensure a network of connected lands that are highly permeable for wildlife to help facilitate movement of wildlife and plant species within Region 5 and those lands adjacent to the region.

Implementing a strategy that uses a variety of open space protection and stewardship to protect wildlife connectivity will reduce the threat of fragmentation and development of those lands, and support the objectives of the State’s Open Space Conservation Plan. There are studies underway that will identify the important areas in the region needed to maintain, protect and enhance existing connectivity for wildlife. The Committee recommends that these studies be consulted when identifying priority projects.

### **III. SUMMARY**

The Committee continues to take an active interest in a wide variety of policies and issues which affect open space. While much of what the Committee has recommended has been incorporated into the previous editions of the Open Space Plan, the Committee feels that there is still a need to emphasize the issues and recommendations contained in this report. In particular, tax issues including state payment of taxes on forest preserve lands and tax reimbursement to local municipalities for 480 and 480a enrolled property are considered to be priorities, along with encouraging local planning to complement open space planning. Due to the large percentage of open space lands in the region, as well as the number of large private land holdings for timber management and agriculture purposes, these policies have a large impact on the continuation of the existing open space character of the region as well as the health of the local economies.

The Committee continues to meet regularly, and to take an active interest in open space conservation planning issues. The focus of the Committee’s deliberations has been to build on the foundation of recommendations developed for the earlier NYS Open Space Conservation Plans and to review issues not previously addressed by the Committee. The Committee has also been kept up-to-date on activities of DEC, OPRHP, not-for-profit and private landowners with regards to proposed and actual open space conservation planning activities.

On a final note, the Committee recommends that the State Legislature pass a technical amendment to change the name of Article 49, Title 2, from “State Land Acquisition” to “Open Space Conservation” to reflect the overall planning process that has evolved.

**WESTERN ADIRONDACKS / EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO /  
UPPER MOHAWK VALLEY – REGION 6**

**REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**COUNTIES**

HERKIMER, JEFFERSON, LEWIS, ONEIDA, ST. LAWRENCE

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES**

Perry Siver..... Herkimer Co.  
Bruce Weakley..... Herkimer Co.  
Don Canfield.....Jefferson Co.  
Christine Watkins – Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District.....Jefferson Co.  
Franklin Archer ..... Lewis Co.  
Patrick Wallace..... Lewis Co.  
Peggy Rotton ..... Oneida Co.  
Robert Seager ..... Oneida Co.  
Walter Paul.....St. Lawrence Co.  
Scott Sutherland.....St. Lawrence Co.

**COMMISSIONERS' APPOINTEES**

John Bartow, Jr. .... Tug Hill Commission  
Robert Boice.....Conservation Fund Advisory Board, Commission on Adirondacks in 21st Century  
Ted Comstock.....Adirondack Landowners Association  
Brian Dam..... Sportsman – Oneida EMC  
Todd Dunham..... Adirondack Conservancy/Land Trust  
Robin Hoffman.....Thousand Islands Land Trust  
Michele Ledoux.....Lewis County Cooperative Extension  
Peter O'Shea..... Resident's Committee to Protect the Adirondacks  
Robert Sauer .....Forest Products Industry  
William Stage ..... Region 6 Fish and Wildlife Management Board  
Daniel Tickner..... Outdoor Recreation Outfitter

**DEC REGIONAL CONTACTS**

Judy Drabicki, ..... Regional Director  
David Smith, ..... Regional Forester  
Stephen Litwhiler, ..... Citizen Participation Specialist  
James Farquhar, ..... Regional Wildlife Manager  
Frank Flack, ..... Regional Fisheries Manager  
Fred Munk, ..... Natural Resources Supervisor  
Michael Contino, ..... Real Property Supervisor



**REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS**

---

**DEC – POTSDAM**

Patrick Whalen, ..... Forester II

**DEC – LOWVILLE**

Keith Rivers, ..... Forester II

**DEC – HERKIMER**

Scott Healy, ..... Forester II

**APA REGIONAL CONTACT – RAYBROOK**

Richard Weber, ..... Conservation Director

**OPRHP REGIONAL CONTACTS – ALEXANDRIA BAY**

Kevin Kieff, ..... Regional Director

Mark Spaulding, ..... Assistant Regional Director

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

February 27, 2013; April 17, 2013; May 15, 2013; May 12, 2015

**ISSUES**

**STEWARDSHIP**

The Regional committee feels there has been minimal progress on the issue of stewardship funding. The maintenance/stewardship burden is increasing as more people use state lands and more state land is acquired. Numerous examples can be sited of forest access roads, hiking trails and designated campsites which are in poor condition or not readily useable. In addition, when funding for stewardship has been obtained, the means to hire staff to complete a project or even supervise a contractor has been lacking. Acquisition of lands creates special burdens since in many cases significant work must be completed to allow for public use, including boundary surveys. Easement lands in particular require an extra level of effort since the easement terms must be monitored, which add significant effort to stewardship responsibilities. Progress is being made in eliminating the backlog of easement baseline and monitoring work, but there is still more work to be done, and this progress still does not contribute to maintenance or provision of public facilities on conservation easement land, which suffers from lack of funding like it does on other state lands. This situation needs to be resolved. The committee recommends the following:

1. Recognition and encouragement of local groups doing maintenance of state lands and waters while providing appropriate oversight,
2. Integral stewardship funding provided along with land acquisition projects,
3. The formation of a multi-agency task force in Albany to address stewardship issues statewide including coordination between agencies and municipalities to avoid duplication or conflicting efforts,
4. Recognize and encourage stewardship on private land.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

Traditional hunting and fishing camp leases at times have been eliminated when the state purchases a working forest conservation easement. This can end long periods of occupation by friends and families who enjoy recreating in the north woods. This long standing tradition does not necessarily conflict with the purpose of these easements. Working forest conservation easements should generally provide for permanent retained rights for at least some existing hunting & fishing camps, while also maximizing all the public recreational uses and access that is compatible with the conservation purposes of the easement. Progress has been made on finding the balance between maintaining camp leases and allowing public use; this should continue and be fine-tuned as more experience is gained with managing conservation easements on a long-term basis.

Region 6 also recognizes a preferred priority of Working Forest Conservation Easements on larger privately owned forests that still contribute to the region's forest economy. These easements are particularly helpful where Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) own significant acreage. While TIMOs have advocated that they are long-term forest landowners, experience over the past decade has shown a high rate of TIMO "rollover" in ownership. Where easements are in place there is some degree of assurance that these properties will remain in working forests. Working Forest Conservation Easements also require forest management plans or third party certification as a part of the easement. Review and approval of forest management plans as well as monitoring of forest management activities places a lot of demand on staff resources. Consideration should be given to always use third party certification (e.g. SFI, FSC) as part of the forest management planning and monitoring process for easements.

A number of existing conservation easements have provisions for access and use that have not yet been made available to the public. Action to open these opportunities to the public should be a priority, and the funding to accomplish the tasks needs to be budgeted. In order to reduce such delays in providing for public use of newly acquired easements, EPF stewardship funds should be allocated as part of the expense of purchasing a conservation easement, to cover the cost of providing immediate public recreational facilities, including posting and for surveying expenses to identify the boundaries of the property when they are not clear.

When negotiating conservation easements, public recreation uses to try and include are; hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, camping, mountain biking, ATV use on easement roads, where appropriate, to access these recreational pursuits and to maximize universal access opportunities, and access to river corridors. The committee feels strongly that any of these recreational uses and more which can be worked into a conservation easement while being compatible with the underlying conservation goals of the landowner should be pursued. Access points for the public must be provided into the easement property where public recreation is allowed.

### TAXES & OPEN SPACE

State Parks and Historic Sites, Wildlife Management Areas, Public Fishing Rights, Unique Areas and Multiple Use Areas are non-taxable under current Real Property Law (with a few exceptions). State

Forests outside the blue line are not taxable for county taxes. This inequitably burdens local taxpayers and subsequently undermines local support for Open Space Protection. The State of New York should pay real estate taxes on all current or future lands and easements under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Committee recommends that legislation be introduced to this effect.

Easement acquisition by the state outside of the Adirondack and Catskill Parks and the Tug Hill Region could result in a lessening of real property taxes to the local community. The success of the easement program outside the Adirondack Park and the Tug Hill Region is dependent upon both landowner and local government support, neither of which may occur if the tax base is eroded by easement acquisitions. The committee recommends that the taxation issue now be addressed on a statewide basis and that the Open Space Plan should make a positive recommendation with regard to payment of taxes by the State of New York on conservation easements outside the Adirondack and Catskill Parks and the Tug Hill Region.

The Forest Tax Law (Sections 480 and 480a of the Real Property Tax Law) is an incentive for the landowner to keep large tracts of land in timber production. However, the resulting increased tax burden falls on the local taxpayers. Reimbursements of lost tax dollars to the municipality would help alleviate this burden. This reimbursement should be made permanent if the transfer in the tax burden within that municipality exceeds 1% of assessed value. Since all the people of New York State benefit from this method of open space preservation, they should all share in the cost. This is especially important as the State considers modifications to 480a which may make it easier for some landowners to enroll. An unintended consequence could be a significant shift to other taxpayers within municipalities, which could lead either to unsustainable harvesting or land fragmentation as lots are sold to pay taxes.

The existing Forest Tax Law provides tax reductions for landowners willing to commit their forestlands to be managed for timber production for a minimum of ten years. While this provides a secondary benefit of protecting the land as open space there is the potential for protecting more land as open space under a tax incentive program if the purposes were broadened to include incentives for restricting development, providing trail corridors, wildlife protection and management, or for other kinds of public purposes. The Committee recommends expansion of the existing Forest Tax Law into a comprehensive Open Space/Forest Tax Law, which would provide broader open space protection through property tax relief. The level of relief would depend on the kind and number of public benefits agreed to by a landowner such as those identified above.

### SMALL PROJECTS

This project category is very important to improve and enhance public utilization of the Open Space resources of this region. The Regional Committee has made numerous recommendations for small projects. Current levels of funding are inadequate and have been for years. The Committee believes funding should be increased. Creation of a line item in the State budget with regional allocations or dividing up the available funds among the regions could help solve this.

The Committee feels the acreage limitation and the limitation on value of \$250,000 are no longer appropriate. The \$250,000 limitation on parcel value is too low considering the significant increase in property values statewide since this limitation was originally set. In addition, the acreage limitation seems unnecessary, as a limitation on value effectively limits the amount of acreage that can be purchased. This dollar limit more simply identifies what might be a parcel significant enough to require extra public scrutiny and approval. It allows actual acreage size of a “small project” to vary in relation to the relative values/acre, so that the typical parcel size that can be acquired in the New York City area as a “small project” will be appropriately small in that area of high cost land, and significantly larger in parts of Region 6 where per acre costs are much lower. All acquisitions should be from willing sellers and with local government approval.

### **LANDOWNER NOTIFICATION**

The Committee recognizes that a need exists to identify a reasonable and feasible mechanism to notify affected landowners when a project is added to the Open Space Plan. The Committee further recognizes that this is a sensitive issue for both the landowner and the agencies developing the Plan. The Committee recommends that a map, showing the approximate shape or extent of lands to be preserved, be produced when a project is added to the Region’s priority list.

### **SURPLUS STATE LANDS**

There continues to be instances where state lands are put up for sale, or otherwise made available to other entities, without a systematic review of their value for open space being done by DEC or OPRHP. The Regional Open Space Committees need to be notified before surplus state lands are put on the market or given away. It is vital that the open space values of these lands be evaluated before they are sold or transferred. This would include all lands controlled by state Departments, Agencies and Authorities, with no exemptions and full enforcement.

### **IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS CONSIDERATION**

The Regional Open Space Committee recognizes the importance of the IBAs and encourage that the review of projects for open space protection include the occurrence of habitats critical for the survival of bird species at risk. These habitats coincide with several current priority projects; Great Lakes Shorelines and Niagara River; St Lawrence River Islands, Shoreline, and Wetlands; Tug Hill Core Forests; and the statewide “State Forest and Wildlife Management Area Protection” project. In Region 6 special attention needs to be given to the associated grasslands adjacent to WMAs in the Lake Ontario Plains and St Lawrence River Valley areas to further the protection of the grassland bird species at risk. Open Space protection strategies can include conservation easements and other programs which encourage continued late season hay cutting and grassland maintenance.

### **AGRICULTURAL LANDS**

Agricultural lands are important open space in the region. The Committee recognizes that working farms are a key economic driver in this region. In addition, farmland contains many important open space values worth permanently protecting, such as soil resources, scenic quality,

wetlands, habitat protection, and food security. Each of our counties has a farmland protection plan which is necessary for participation in New York State's highly successful Farmland Protection Implementation Program. We should be encouraging counties to participate in this program to protect these valuable farmlands which also can provide open space, rural character, wildlife habitat and stream corridor protection. The Farmland Protection Program has historically been underfunded. To meet the need of farmland protection throughout the state, the Committee recommends higher levels of funding in the EPF for the farmland preservation programs of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FUNDING OPEN SPACE PROJECTS**

The Environmental Protection Fund, the source of funding for many programs that support the implementation of this plan, continues to operate at a significantly reduced level. Funding for open space conservation, municipal parks, and other important programs remains decreased by significant levels, including a cut of more than 60% for the open space program. New York benefits from open space conservation. A 2012 study by the Trust for Public Land showed that for every \$1 invested in open space protection through the EPF, \$7 in natural goods and services are returned to the state. Furthermore, key industries such as outdoor recreation benefit from open space conservation. According to a 2012 study by the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation contributes more than \$33 billion in consumer spending in New York each year, and directly supports more than 300,000 jobs throughout our state. In order to successfully implement the community supported goals put forth in this Open Space Conservation Plan, New York State must restore funding for open space conservation in the Environmental Protection Fund.

### **STEWARDSHIP FUNDING**

The ability of the state to provide sufficient stewardship of existing and new lands for both fee and conservation easement lands continues to be inadequate. If our state is to reap the economic benefits of open space conservation, we must invest in the stewardship of these resources so that they are accessible, conserved for future generations, ecologically productive, economically beneficial, and able to serve as buffers for our communities from the impacts of climate change and extreme weather. The Committee's recommendations to deal with this situation are as follows:

- Additional funding sources as well as additional staff must be provided in order to properly care for our heritage of conserved lands; a statewide high level task force should be convened to develop solutions to providing sufficient resources to care for our lands, and
- Volunteers and volunteer organizations should be an important component of strategies developed to improve our stewardship of state lands. This is not intended to absolve the state of stewardship responsibilities.

### **STATEWIDE SMALL PROJECTS**

This category of acquisition should be funded through a line item in the budget at an annual level which will provide a viable program in each region. The use of habitat stamp funds should also be considered for small projects.

The current limitation requiring small projects to be 200 acres or less in size should be dropped, with the value limitation left as the only criteria for small project qualification. In addition, due to the increase in land values since the small project category was created the dollar value limitation should be increased to \$750,000.

### **OPEN SPACE PLAN REVISION SCHEDULE**

The main body of the plan should be revised every five years instead of the current 3 year time frame. However, the Regional Committee should evaluate project status, policy and program issues on an annual basis, and revise if necessary.

### **ALL PROJECTS RATING SYSTEM**

All projects are rated in one or more of 6 resource categories. Projects that can achieve a high rating (greater than 50 points) in more than one category should be provided extra points in their rating. The rating forms currently in use need to be updated to highlight this modification. The important factor is that a project needs to be rated above 50 points in at least one category before it can be considered. Once a project is considered, it is pursued for acquisition on its own merits and not compared to other projects which may have scored a few more points.

### **ENERGY GENERATION & TRANSMISSION**

The geographic area of Region 6 has a long history of providing for the generation and transmission of energy for all New Yorkers. Water power and hydroelectric generation shaped most of the region's economy and communities. The region is home to many hydro generation facilities, including the state's second largest hydroelectric generation facility at the Robert Moses St. Lawrence power project, the largest wind farm east of the Mississippi River and more than 20 additional proposed wind facilities, has one of the State's three biomass-fired electrical generation facilities, as well as several large transmission corridors of international, statewide and regional significance. Clearly, the region is a major source of carbon free and alternative electrical generation capacity. This energy production and distribution capacity and the potential for future projects are important to New York State and the Northeast as a whole, and the future planning for and siting of electrical generation and transmission facilities has the potential to dramatically effect open space within the region.

In light of the current and future importance and impact to the region of energy generating facilities, the Region 6 Open Space Committee strongly supports consideration of Open Space Conservation in the siting of these facilities including a review of the visual aspects and impacts on Open Space resources under the provisions of Article 10.

### **INVASIVE SPECIES CONSIDERATION**

Invasive species pose a serious threat to our open spaces, both those protected by this plan in the past and those that could be protected in the future. These species impair the economic and

ecological value of lands and waters across NY. In order to protect NY from this threat we must 1) ensure that NY has a robust regulatory program that reduces incidents of new invasions, and allows for rapid response when they do occur; 2) continues to provide funding, and enhances funding levels for invasive species in the Environmental Protection Fund and 3) provides adequate staffing and capital funding for state agencies, including the Department of Environmental Conservation, Agriculture and Markets and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to address the threat of invasives on state lands and in state waters.

The Regional Open Space Committee recognizes the development of Partnerships for Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) throughout the state over the past several years. Region 6 includes both Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program and St Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario. Projects that encompass lands that are within identified Invasive Species Protection Zones or have been part of invasive species control and eradication efforts should be given additional consideration.

### **LOW VOLUME ROADS LEGISLATION**

Throughout Region 6, as with many rural areas of New York, there is an extensive network of “low volume” (less than 400 average daily trips) roads. These often unpaved and narrow roads have become part of the municipal (mostly) town public highway system. These roads provide critical access to rural residences, agricultural areas and recreational resources yet they often do not meet State and national highway standards. In addition, for two classifications of Low Volume Roads (Agricultural Access and Recreational Access) these roads can be designated “minimum maintenance” which provides standards for maintenance and often includes no winter snowplowing.

For several years there has been attempts to pass “Low Volume Roads” legislation which would codify what many towns are already doing under their Municipal Home Rule Authority and guidance issued by the 1990’s Low Volume Roads Council and NYS DOT. Presently legislation is pending (S. 1965/A.1407) that would codify the designation and classification of Low Volume Roads in State Highway Law. This legislation has the support of the NYS Town Highway Superintendent Association, the NYS Association of Towns and several environmental groups who view this type of highway management as beneficial to New York’s agricultural and forested open spaces as well as the migration of wildlife throughout New York’s rural landscapes. Another benefit of low volume roads is a decrease in parcelization and fragmentation of remote areas, which maintains their open space values and benefits for water quality, air quality, and wildlife habitat.

With Highway maintenance averaging 50% of all town expenses and as much as 70–90% of rural town highway expenses this law is also beneficial to managing property taxes in rural New York. The Low Volume Roads legislation was also endorsed by the Governor’s Task Force on mandate Relief.

### **IMPROVE ACCESS TO EXISTING STATE LAND AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

Significant effort has been spent in purchasing land and conservation easements throughout Region 6 over the past decade. New effort and funds need to be spent to improve the public access to those lands. As the population of the North Country ages, more easily accessible trails and access points need to be developed to accommodate those that still want to enjoy the state's resources. Universal access facilities must be incorporated into design plans for new projects where possible. Allowing the use of ATVs for access to recreational pursuits can go a long way to accommodate the needs of persons with a mobility disability, when in compliance with vehicle and traffic laws and other rules and regulations.

### **TOURISM AND RECREATION**

The tourism and recreational economy of Northern New York is very dependent on both publicly owned (e.g. State parks, fee owned State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas, Unique Areas, and State held easements that retain public recreational rights) as well as private open spaces (e.g. farms and forests). These open space resources provide not only a valuable visual landscape that attracts visitors and tourists to the region but provide a network of infrastructure in terms of trails, camping opportunities, and access to fish and wildlife resources. While the State does support planning for the publicly owned open spaces (e.g. Unit Management Plans) there could be more planning that integrates the units or integrates them with privately owned open spaces around them. There should be some consideration to supporting planning and, more importantly, implementation projects that leverage both the public and private owned open space resources throughout the region.

DEC and OPRHP should offer better access for recreation by maintaining traditional access in future open space acquisitions. Such access may take the form of roads and trails being open for motor vehicles (including float planes) leading to hunting, fishing and trapping areas and to lakes and rivers, considering seasonal closure needs. Land use classifications should seek to sustain sporting access and large tracts of land deemed suitable as wilderness should provide for wild forest corridors that lead to back country areas and remote ponds and rivers. New York State Parks should provide more hunting and fishing access and opportunities.

### **USE OF EMINENT DOMAIN IN THE STATE'S OPEN SPACE PLAN**

The committee recommends that the plan continue to include the specific constraints on the use of eminent domain that have appeared in every version of the plan since its inception in 1992.

### **SUMMARY**

Open space protection is important to each committee member. Some members strongly support wilderness preservation while others prefer to see the acquisition of small parcels which enhance the public use and enjoyment of New York State lands. Every member of this Committee agrees that the payment of real estate taxes by the State of New York on all public lands and easements administered by DEC and OPRHP is key to a successful open space program. Equally important, funding at appropriate levels for stewardship of State Lands is essential for the protection and use of these lands.



Open Space protection can be accomplished in many different ways; by ownership by towns, villages, counties, the State, land trusts, private individuals or conservation groups. Conservation easements can prevent unwanted development while keeping valuable lands in timber production or for recreational use. The Committee is anxious to meet on a regular basis to learn about the progress that has been made and new opportunities. By reviewing and revising the project priority list on a regular basis, members can keep their constituents informed and OPRHP and DEC can be made aware of local concerns regarding open space projects. This process is felt to be very worthwhile for the communities as they plan for the future.

**CENTRAL NEW YORK – REGION 7  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**COUNTIES**

BROOME, CAYUGA, CHENANGO, CORTLAND, MADISON, OSWEGO, ONONDAGA, TIOGA, TOMPKINS

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
Charles Banner–Haley.....	OPRHP State Appointment
Katherine W. Borgella .....	Tompkins County
Frank Evangelisti .....	Broome County
Richard Harrington .....	OPRHP State Appointment
Robert H. Hazelton, Jr.....	DEC State Appointment
Gordon Heisler .....	OPRHP State Appointment
Elaine D. Jardine .....	Tioga County
Mary Kunzler–Larmann.....	OPRHP State Appointment
William Lansley.....	Onondaga County
Karen Noyes .....	Oswego County
Wayne Outwater .....	Chenango County
Charles Parker .....	DEC State Appointment
Jim Petreszyn.....	Madison County
Dennis Rhoads .....	DEC State Appointment
Danny Ross .....	Cortland County
Gregory Sargis.....	DEC State Appointment
Sandra Souder .....	DEC State Appointment
Michele Wunderlich .....	Cayuga County
Andrew E. Zepp .....	OPRHP State Appointment

**STATE AGENCY SUPPORT STAFF**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Dan Bishop	Natural Resources Supervisor	DEC	Cortland
Diane Carlton	Citizen Participation Specialist	DEC	Syracuse
Robert Hiltbrand	Regional Director	OPRHP	Jamesville
Tim Joseph	Regional Director	OPRHP	Trumansburg
Steve Joule	Regional Wildlife Manager	DEC	Cortland
Dave Lemon	Regional Fisheries Manager	DEC	Cortland
Kenneth Lynch	Regional Director	DEC	Syracuse
Les Miller	Sr. Engineering Technician	OPRHP	Jamesville
Janet O'Hara	Secretary	DEC	Cortland
Richard Pancoe	Supervising Forester	DEC	Cortland
Sue Poelvoorde	Natural Resources Planner	OPRHP	Trumansburg
Dave Sinclair	Regional Forester	DEC	Cortland

Glenn Wolford

Real Property Supervisor

DEC

Syracuse

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

February 28, 2013; March 26, 2013; April 16, 2013; May 16, 2013

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Disaster Risk Reduction**

As we evaluate our region’s open space needs of the future, it will be vitally important to consider the natural resources which reduce community risk and increase resilience in the face of climate change. As we face the realities of more frequent extreme weather, flooding, sea level rise and other projections, the protection of healthy and functioning floodplains, wetlands, beaches and coastal systems, and forested riparian zones becomes more important than ever before, as cost effective measures to help manage flood waters. Conserving open space will help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather and allow for migration of valuable habitats. Continuing to invest in open space resources that serve as natural infrastructure will contribute to the long term health and resiliency of our communities. Consistent with the findings of the NYS 2100 Commission Report\*, these investments will meet multiple economic, health and green infrastructure objectives in a cost effective way.

**FAST & CERTAIN LAND ACQUISITION**

Currently, the mechanisms in place for state agencies, local municipalities and non-profits to access funds to acquire land identified as priorities in the Open Space Plan are lengthy, cumbersome, and highly competitive, not allowing for any degree of certainty that the funds will be forthcoming. Opportunities for these types of acquisition are quickly dwindling and typically must be acted on with great speed, optimally in a climate of certainty of funding. The Advisory Committee recommends that the state develop solutions to these problems to allow all of the land protection partners opportunities to access fast, accountable, and certain funds for land acquisitions identified as priorities in the Open Space Plan. Additionally, state agencies should identify “bottlenecks” in acquisition procedure and develop streamlined processes to finalize purchases in a timely manner. The Committee recommends the state focus on the following areas among others:

- Identifying specific funding for different types of projects;
- Streamlining the closing process;
- Clarifying the process for acquisition from third parties;
- Explore the feasibility of using purchase options;
- Examine existing staff resources and need to fill critical positions to improve acquisition process and property management; and
- Identify publicly owned properties on waterfront and evaluate the highest and best open space use.

**Funding**

The Environmental Protection Fund, the source of funding for many programs that support the implementation of this plan, continues to operate at a significantly reduced level. Funding for open space conservation, municipal parks, and other important programs remains decreased by

significant levels, including a cut of more than 60% for the open space program. New York benefits from open space conservation. A 2012 study by the Trust for Public Land showed that for every \$1 invested in open space protection through the EPF, \$7 in natural goods and services are returned to the state. Furthermore, key industries such as outdoor recreation benefit from open space conservation. According to a 2012 study by the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation contributes more than \$33 billion in consumer spending in New York each year, and directly supports more than 300,000 jobs throughout our state. In order to successfully implement the community supported goals put forth in this Open Space Conservation Plan, New York State must restore funding for open space conservation in the Environmental Protection Fund.

In addition to funding for the protection of open space, New York State must dedicate additional resources to state land stewardship. DEC and OPRHP are still operating with steeply reduced staff levels, and have limited resources for land stewardship. If our state is to reap the economic benefits of open space conservation, we must invest in the stewardship of these resources so that they are accessible, conserved for future generations, ecologically productive, economically beneficial, and able to serve as buffers for our communities from the impacts of climate change and extreme weather.

### **SHORELINE PROTECTION & WATER TRAILS**

The demand for recreational access to Finger Lakes, Lake Ontario, Oneida Lake, and the shorelines of other major waterbodies, as well as the need to protect the remaining natural shoreline, continues to increase while opportunities to acquire shoreline become more expensive and harder to find. Additionally, shoreline parcels that are typically isolated from adjoining state-owned land, don't fit neatly into the type of land acquisition work currently being done by OPRHP or DEC, and stewardship of those lands can be more difficult given the high values and normally close proximity of neighbors to the parcels. Access is needed to accommodate a diverse community of shoreline users, including kayakers, boaters, swimmers, bird watchers, hunters, anglers, and those simply seeking solitude by the water. While the character of these shoreline sites might vary along with permitted recreational uses, each would provide opportunities for kayakers and canoeists, at a minimum, to access the shore. It is presumed that these sites would also allow for low-intensity uses such as water-fowl hunting, fishing, trapping, and bird watching.

In order to effectively conserve remaining shoreline parcels that are of special significance, the Advisory Committee recommends that DEC and OPRHP work together to: 1) clarify, and possibly redefine, their respective priorities within this resource area, 2) creatively identify models and mechanisms that could facilitate land protection along the Finger Lakes, Lake Ontario, Oneida Lake, and the shorelines of other major waterbodies, including leveraging resources by partnering with a local municipality or a non-profit land protection partner to acquire and manage threatened shoreline parcels, 3) in conjunction with tourism agencies define and create a network of "water trails" consisting of strategically spaced publicly accessible shoreline open

space parcels, and perhaps shoreline businesses, to allow public access to the waterfront and its amenities, and 4) communicate these priorities and strategies to their land protection partners.

### **REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (REDC)**

The advisory committee encourages each REDC to utilize the Open Space Plan and specifically the Regional Advisory Committee Recommendations when formulating their strategic plans and requests that OSP Priority Conservation Projects be given special consideration when reviewing Consolidated Funding Application submissions. Regional tourism and recreational opportunities involving open space should be identified and promoted including projects like the Genny Green Trail, Emerald Necklace and Finger Lakes water trail.

### **SUPPORT APPLICATION OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT TO MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION & PROTECTION IN REGION 7**

We encourage the NYS to adopt legislation to enable local municipalities to adopt a real estate transfer tax in support of open space preservation options, including the Community Preservation Act which funds acquisition through use of a Real Estate Transfer Tax, local bond initiatives, and public-private partnerships, for use in the increasingly critical acquisition, protection and preservation of local municipal open space opportunities.

### **DEVELOPMENT & STEWARDSHIP**

It is critical that the legislature recognize that conservation of Open Space includes the crucially important responsibility for care and protection of the resource once it is acquired. Stewardship of lands and easements is frequently time consuming and expensive and must be funded at levels necessary to fulfill these obligations. There is an on-going and increasing need for maintenance of natural area acquisitions and development of the infrastructure for new parks. While currently stewardship dollars are vastly insufficient for the maintenance and capital improvements needed on existing lands, acquisition of additional critical areas must continue to ensure protection of adequate open space for future generations. In recent years the State has acquired more than 1 million additional acres of land for Open Space. Greatly increased allocations for maintenance and capital improvements on state open space lands must be made available to support the increased acquisitions.

In addition, state agencies should develop management plans that address stewardship concerns and make the most efficient utilization of such alternatives as agency based volunteer groups, intergovernmental agreements, and/or nonprofit organizations.

Currently, there are few examples of successful partnerships between the state and a local municipality where the municipality manages and stewards land on behalf of New York State. The Advisory Committee would like to see more of these types of partnerships, as they address the stewardship burden, noted above, which is currently a drain on state resources and staff, while allowing for increased governmental efficiency. One way such partnerships could be encouraged

is to create a website that contains sample Memorandum of Understanding that have been used successfully in New York State, so that each time a partnership is formed there is no need to recreate the wheel.

**COORDINATE STATE EFFORTS ON OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND PROTECTION AND FLOOD MITIGATION**

Thousands of acres of productive farmland in the Finger Lakes Region are now under protection through New York State's highly successful Farmland Protection Implementation Program. The Advisory Committee recommends that staff from DEC, OPRHP and Ag & Markets meet annually to review open space and farmland protection programs, and identify opportunities to enhance one another's work. One example of an opportunity to enhance a program is to incorporate model Resource Protection Area language into the standard conservation easement template for the Farmland Protection Program, to encourage farmers and their sponsoring agencies to consider opportunities to protect riparian buffers, including floodplain and wetland areas, or other key natural resources while still supporting farm viability.

**REAL ESTATE TAX PAYMENTS ON STATE LANDS**

State Parks and Historic Sites, Wildlife Management Areas, Unique Areas, Multiple Use Areas and Public Fishing Rights are non-taxable under current Real Property Law (with a few exceptions). State Forests outside the blue line are not taxable for county taxes. This inequitably burdens local taxpayers and subsequently undermines local support for Open Space Protection. The State of New York should pay real estate taxes on all current or future lands and easements under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Committee recommends that legislation be introduced to this effect.

Easement acquisition by the state outside of the Adirondack and Catskill Parks and the Tug Hill Region could result in a lessening of real property taxes to the local community. The success of the easement program outside the Adirondack Park and the Tug Hill Region is dependent upon both landowner and local government support, neither of which may occur if the tax base is eroded by easement acquisitions. The committee recommends that the taxation issue now be addressed on a statewide basis and that the Open Space Plan should make a positive recommendation with regard to payment of taxes by the State of New York on conservation easements outside the Adirondack and Catskill Parks and the Tug Hill Region.

**TAX INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE LANDOWNERS TO DONATE LAND & CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

The Forest Tax Law (Sections 480 and 480a of the Real Property Tax Law) is an incentive for the landowner to keep large tracts of land in timber production. However, the resulting increased tax burden falls on the local taxpayers. Reimbursements of lost tax dollars to the municipality would help alleviate this burden. This reimbursement should be made permanent if the transfer in the tax burden within that municipality exceeds 1% of assessed value. Since all the people of New

York State benefit from this method of open space preservation, they should all share in the cost. This is especially important as the State considers modifications to 480a which may make it easier for some landowners to enroll. An unintended consequence could be a significant shift to other taxpayers within municipalities, which could lead either to unsustainable harvesting or land fragmentation as lots are sold to pay taxes.

The existing Forest Tax Law provides tax reductions for landowners willing to commit their forestlands to be managed for timber production for a minimum of ten years. While this provides a secondary benefit of protecting the land as open space there is the potential for protecting more land as open space under a tax incentive program if the purposes were broadened to include incentives for restricting development, providing trail corridors, wildlife protection and management or for other kinds of public purposes. The Committee recommends expansion of the existing Forest Tax Law into a comprehensive Open Space/Forest Tax Law, which would provide broader open space protection through property tax relief. The level of relief would depend on the kind and number of public benefits agreed to by a landowner such as those identified above.

Private lands are under increasing development pressure that threatens to fragment open space and undermine the State Open Space Plan. The Committee recommends continuation of the recently enacted legislation that encourages private landowners to donate land and easements for conservation of open space. These incentives address the single greatest barrier to easement donations by providing relief from property tax burdens on the donated lands. Where appropriate and possible, public access should be incorporated into any conservation easement. The Region 7 Open Space Committee believes that the heavy New York State Property Tax burden is detrimental to the preservation of Open Space. The Committee therefore requests that NYS address other new, meaningful ways to mitigate the property tax burden.

### PROTECTION OF EXISTING CANAL LANDS & WATERS

The State has many miles of shorelines and large acreages of lands associated with the Erie and Barge Canal network, which is a major focus of scenic, historic, ecological, and recreational interests. The Committee views these lands and waters as an extremely high priority resource to protect for the benefits of present and future generations. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that when NYS Canal Corporation determines to surplus canal lands and waters, the appropriate state agencies and local municipalities be given the opportunity for land transfers to protect open space.

Surplus Canal Lands Evaluate current statutory framework for transfer of canal lands to state agencies and/or municipalities and evaluate potential for improvement.

### FLOODPLAIN PROTECTION

**Riparian buffers and wetland protection projects aimed to reduce the impacts of storms and flooding on human and natural communities**– Scientists have documented changes in the climate

of the Northeast United States that correlate with changes in temperature across the globe. With increased temperature we can expect more heavy rains and stronger storms, more hurricanes and tropical storms which will result in increased local flooding, will expand floodplain areas and increase the number of high velocity flows. Unchecked development in frequently inundated areas has and will continue to increase the cost of replacement or relocation and the loss of natural floodplain.

Open Space conservation programs and strategies that focus on protecting wetlands, floodplain forests and lake shore coastlines should be our first line of defense to protect adjacent private property and communities from increased storm intensity, flooding and rising coastlines. These natural resource-based programs are usually far cheaper than “engineered” solutions that often shift the negative impacts downstream or to adjacent property owners, as well as not being sustainable for the long term nor protecting natural resources. As an added benefit, these programs can promote the resilience of natural communities to climate change (for example, by enhancing aquatic connectivity, protecting cover along streams and lakes that serve as refugia for trout and other cold water fish species).

Implementation strategies include:

- Sensible land use regulations and incentive programs to help protect private property, save communities money and conserve valuable wildlife habitat and create recreational opportunities;
- Acquisition of fee and easements in riparian corridors and wetlands;
- Promotion of sustainable forestry practices as a preferred land use over development adjacent to riparian areas and wetlands;
- Promotion of urban and Community Forestry & Green Infrastructure.

Prior to implementing fee and easement acquisition, baseline information including the condition of habitats and projections of impacts from climate change in costal and riparian areas should be conducted in order to assess potential impacts and benefits. Modeling the “floodplain of the future” may be needed to accommodate the new hydrology likely to occur with more intense storm events.

Modeling can inform where strategic investments in the protection of riparian and wetland areas through fee and easement acquisitions can promote more climate resilient human and natural communities, and should be used to prioritize protection projects.

### INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive species pose a serious threat to our open spaces, both those protected by this plan in the past and those that could be protected in the future. These species impair the economic and ecological value of lands and waters across NY. In order to protect NY from this threat we must: 1) ensure that NY has a robust regulatory program that reduces incidents of new invasions, and allows for rapid response when they do occur; 2) continues to provide funding, and enhances



funding levels, for invasive species in the Environmental Protection Fund; and 3) provides adequate staffing and capital funding for state agencies, including the Department of Environmental Conservation, Agriculture and Markets and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to address the threat of invasives on state lands and in state waters.

The Regional Open Space Committee recognizes the development of Partnerships for Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) throughout the state over the past several years. Projects that encompass lands that are within identified Invasive Species Protection Zones or have been part of invasive species control and eradication efforts should be given additional consideration.

### LOW VOLUME ROADS

Throughout many rural areas of New York, there is an extensive network of “low volume” (less than 400 average daily trips) roads. These roads are often unpaved and narrow easement roads that have become part of the municipal (mostly) town public highway system. These roads provide critical access to rural residences, agricultural areas and recreational resources yet they often do not meet State and national highway standards. In addition, for two classifications of Low Volume Roads (Agricultural Access and Recreational Access) these roads can be designated “minimum maintenance” which provides standards for maintenance and often includes no winter snowplowing.

For several years there has been attempts to pass “Low Volume Roads” legislation which would codify what many towns are already doing under their Municipal Home Rule Authority and guidance issued by the 1990’s Low Volume Roads Council and NYS DOT. Presently legislation is pending (S. 1965/A.1407) that would codify the designation and classification of Low Volume Roads in State Highway Law. This legislation has the support of the NYS Town Highway Superintendent Association, the NYS Association of Towns and several environmental groups who view this scheme of highway management as beneficial to New York’s agricultural and forested open spaces as well as the migration of wildlife throughout New York’s rural landscapes.

With Highway maintenance averaging 50% of all town expenses and as much as 70–90% of rural town highway expenses this law is also beneficial to managing property taxes in rural New York. The Low Volume Roads legislation was also endorsed by the Governor’s Task Force on mandate Relief.

### WATERSHED COORDINATION

New York State should facilitate regular meetings that encourage watershed stakeholders to share ideas and develop projects. Currently, there is little organization amongst watershed groups where ideas and projects can be coordinated. Benefits to open space protection can be advanced with better organization of efforts within watersheds.

### OPEN SPACE UPDATES

#### NYSDEC Region 7 Transfers of Jurisdiction with OPRHP

## **REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS**

---

Frenchman Island State Park, Oneida Lake – transferred to DEC as an addition to 3 Mile Bay WMA.

Hunts Pond State Park, Chenango County – transferred to DEC as an addition to Hunts Pond State Forest.

Sandy Island Beach\Sandy Pond Beach UA, Oswego County –transferred to State Parks as an addition to Sandy Island Beach State Park.

### **Other Region 7 DEC Open Space Acquisitions 2009–2013**

Northern Montezuma, Cayuga County – 73 acre land donation north of Duck Lake (2010), 366 acre transfer of jurisdiction from the Office of General Services of lands now or formerly underwater along the Seneca River and on the southwest side of Howland Island (2012).

Salmon River Corridor, Oswego County – 48 acre addition to Hall Island State Forest (2009).

Finger Lakes Shorelines – Owasco Lake, Owasco Flats, Cayuga County, 11 acre first acquisition for the Owasco Flats WMA (2011).

Emerald Necklace – 21 acre addition to Shindagin Hollow State Forest donated by the Finger Lakes Land Trust (2010).

Genny Green Trail \ Link Trail – 8 acre addition to New Michigan State Forest, Chenango County (2011).

Public Fishing Rights – small fee donation completed on Carpenters Brook, Onondaga County (2010).

Waterway Access – Susquehanna River, Broome County – .5 acre donation by the Town of Colesville (2009) in connection with replacement of the Ouaquaga Bridge.

Other – 42 acre addition to Tioughnioga WMA, Madison County funded by the National Wild Turkey Federation (2010), 73 acre addition to Hoxie Gorge State Forest, Cortland County (2010).

### **FINGER LAKES STATE PARKS REGION 2009 OPEN SPACE PLAN REGION 7 ACQUISITION PROGRESS REPORT 2009 TO 2012**

Note: The Funds Expended amount includes purchase price and pro-rated tax reimbursements.

Fair Haven Beach State Park (93)

Juniper Pond Area: 7.92 acres  
Fee Acquisition  
Funds Expended: \$23,995.86

State Parks Greenbelt/Tompkins County (101)

***Robert H. Treman State Park***

Watershed Protection Projects:

- 1) 27.65 acres  
Fee Acquisition  
Funds Expended: \$148,264.11
- 2) 6 acres  
Donation  
Funds Expended: \$25.63

***Buttermilk Falls State Park***

Finger Lakes Trail Corridor between Buttermilk Falls and Robert H. Treman  
Fee Acquisition  
2.5 acres  
Funds Expended: \$3,800.00

***Taughannock Falls State Park***

Watershed and Viewshed Protection Project  
7.6 acres  
Donation  
Funds Expended: \$780.01

***Black Diamond Trail***

Trail Corridor, Steep Slope & Viewshed Protection – Project in process to be completed in 2013  
69 acres  
Fee Acquisition  
Funds to be Expended: \$240,000†  
† Estimated cost

Corridor Enhancement – land for rest stop/inclement weather shelter  
1.37 acres  
Donation  
Funds Expended: \$341.04

Total Funds Expended for Finger Lakes State Parks: \$417,206.65

Submitted by Sue A. Poelvoorde, Senior Natural Resources Planner

**WESTERN FINGER LAKES – REGION 8  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**COUNTIES**

CHEMUNG, GENESEE, LIVINGSTON, MONROE, ONTARIO, ORLEANS, SCHUYLER, SENECA, STEUBEN,  
WAYNE, YATES

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES**

John Pastrick .....Chemung County  
Felipe Oltramari.....Genesee County  
Benjamin Gajewski .....Livingston County  
Paul A. Johnson\ Rochelle Bell .....Monroe County  
Darlys McDonough\ Tom Harvey .....Ontario County  
Wayne Hale\ Jim Bensley .....Orleans County  
Frank Sinicropi .....Seneca County  
Kate Bartholomew .....Schuyler County  
Amy Dlugos .....Steuben County  
Brett DeRoo .....Wayne County  
Robert Schwarting .....Yates County

**COMMISSIONERS' APPOINTEES**

Bruce Gillman .....Finger Lakes Community College  
Andy Zepp/David Diaz .....Finger Lakes Land Trust  
Lee Younge .....At-Large Committee Member  
Evelyn Gay Mills .....Genesee Land Trust  
Robert O'Brien .....Cotton-Hanlon, Inc.  
Robert Mauceli .....Rochester Birding Association  
John Plummer .....Town of Greece  
Barlow Rhodes .....Fish and Wildlife Management Board  
Irene Szabo .....Finger Lakes Trail Conference  
Zack Odell\ Andy Wheatcraft .....The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

**DEC REGIONAL CONTACTS**

John A Gibbs – Supervisor for Natural Resources  
Linda J. Vera – Citizen Participation Specialist  
Michael Wasilco – Regional Wildlife Manager  
Mark Gooding – Regional Forester  
Webster Pearsall – Regional Fisheries Manager  
David Mager – Regional Real Property Supervisor

**OPRHP REGIONAL CONTACTS**

Richard Parker – Regional Director, Genesee Region

Marcus Riehl – Senior Natural Resources Planner, Finger Lakes Region

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

January 9, 2013; January, 29, 2013; February 20, 2013; March 13, 2013;

April 24, 2013; May 8, 2013

**INTRODUCTION**

The tasks set out for the Regional Advisory Committee (Committee) were to review the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan 2009 (2009 Plan); evaluate the status of all previously listed projects and update and develop a new regional priority list. The Committee was also asked to provide recommendations on issues including land conservation practices as they apply to future storm events; green infrastructure; stewardship; environmental justice; State tax payments on land it owns; enhancing local government capacity to develop and implement complementary local open space protection programs; fully integrating the State Wildlife Grant program and Forest Action Plan and; addressing global climate change. Other important issues for consideration included promotion of outdoor recreation, tourism, universal access and land acquisitions near and in urban areas.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**STEWARDSHIP**

With resources stretched thin, it was discussed on several occasions the importance of developing long-term partnerships as a means to properly manage and maintain state-owned lands. This theme has been a longstanding component of Region 8's policy discussions. Despite repeated inclusions in prior Open Space Plans, too often public agencies still forget to look for interested private organizations who may be both interested in and capable of carrying out important projects when the state is unable to act in time. The Committee recognizes that stewardship is the primary issue facing open space conservation in order to protect natural resources and utilize best management practices. The committee pointed out that the cornerstone of an effective stewardship program is providing adequate staffing at both the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

The issue of managing open space and public lands at the local level using volunteers and/or not-for-profit organizations is of concern to several the county representatives. Liability insurance coverage, workman's compensation and disability coverage and conflicts with collective bargaining agreements were obstacles that currently face most counties. The Town of Greece shared with the Committee their volunteer program that manages these issues.

The Committee devoted much of its allocated time to discussing stewardship of open space lands, and developing suggestions for improving stewardship of state lands, and by inference, of other open spaces held in trust by other government agencies and private organizations in New York. It is widely accepted that stewardship of New York's open spaces is under-funded and inadequately staffed. Consequently, the public's expectations for the care and accessibility of open space resources are often times not met.

The Committee agreed that some stewardship methods vary in their potential to work, depending upon the open space application. A flexible, multi-tiered approach may be needed to reach stewardship goals. Each tract of protected open space offers unique challenges and opportunities to accomplish stewardship needs. Some open space areas have intensive infrastructure development and use (e.g., state parks). Others benefit from community interest and strong local partnerships, for example with a town or county government or nonprofit organization. Others are less intensively used but large tracts require more resources for adequate monitoring. The Committee recommends that a host of strategies be considered for meeting the varied stewardship needs of open space lands under the jurisdiction of OPRHP, DEC, local governments and nonprofit organizations.

The Committee's stewardship discussion was important and many ideas were generated. The Committee agreed that reviewing past Open Space Plans to evaluate how effective stewardship has been across New York would be a worthy effort. Great suggestions in prior plans tend to be forgotten during current efforts to protect worthy sites.

### **COMMITTEE SUGGESTIONS FOR GENERATING RESOURCES FOR STEWARDSHIP**

- Review previous plans from across the State and develop a comprehensive model that every Region can implement.
- The issue of volunteer liability and workmen's compensation insurance while working on public lands should be uniformly addressed across the state, as this is often a disincentive for volunteerism for both the volunteers and the agencies and organizations which host them.
- Annually allocate a percentage of the land acquisition portion of the Environmental Protection Fund for stewardship activities. The enabling legislation should be amended if needed to affect this. A dedicated and earmarked source of funding such as this is needed to address on-going stewardship of open spaces in New York State.
- The Committee encourages OPRHP and DEC to continue to seek and utilize partnerships with federal, state, and local governments, private organizations and individuals, to provide stewardship on open spaces. Several successful examples of management agreements now exist (Braddock Bay, Onanda Park in the Town of Canandaigua, Montezuma Wetlands Complex, and Sugar Hill State Forest) where agencies and/or organizations have formal written agreements to partner together to steward public lands for the common good. Such partnerships usually are more cost-effective in meeting stewardship needs than each agency going it alone.
- Stewardship activities and costs should be addressed not only as a part of the acquisition planning process, but also integrated into Unit Management Plans that should be prepared for all open space areas. Recognition and priority given to the long-term stewardship requirements of each area should be elevated in the planning processes the agencies undertake both prior and subsequent to acquisition.

### **FARMLAND PROTECTION**

The Committee recognizes that farmland contains many important open space values worth permanently protecting, such as soil resources, scenic quality, wetlands, habitat protection and food security. Implementing Smart Growth strategies within our cities, villages and hamlets promotes desirable living areas, reducing pressure on agricultural lands. Ironically, one county noted that the potential for natural gas development is keeping large tracts of land intact as landowners explore alternate means to address property taxes. The purchase of development rights (PDR) should continue and be supported by adequate funding. Budgets for these programs continue to be underfunded, and gives preference to those farms that have high-quality soils and face significant development pressure.

### **ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR LAND CONSERVATION**

A review of the 2009 Plan found that the language developed during that process remained relevant. County and other municipal governments are in excellent position to implement many of the policies espoused in this Open Space Plan if their capacity is enhanced to do so. Every effort should be made by the State legislature and regulatory agencies to enable the use of land use tools and partnerships to achieve desired land conservation goals, in the most effective and efficient manner. Counties and other municipalities should be authorized to collaborate in the use of modern and effective land preservation and conservation techniques, particularly to target efforts to high environmental and cultural resource value areas. Additional incentive funding should be provided to stimulate local and non-governmental partnerships that achieve the objectives of Open Space, Agricultural, Conservation, and Cultural Resource Lands Protection.

### **LAND CONSERVATION AS IT APPLIES TO STORM PREPAREDNESS**

The Committee evaluated the open space needs of the future and determined quite readily that natural resources must be considered when assessing the risks associated with climate change. As we face the prospects of more frequent extreme weather, flooding, sea level rise and other projections, the protection of healthy and functioning floodplains, wetlands, beaches, coastal systems, and forested riparian zones becomes more important than ever before, as cost effective measures to help manage flood waters. Conserving open space will help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather and allow for migration of valuable habitats. Continuing to invest in open space resources that serve as natural infrastructure will contribute to the long-term health and resiliency of our communities. Consistent with the findings of the NYS 2100 Commission Report, these investments will meet multiple economic, health and green infrastructure objectives in a cost effective way.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Committee recognizes that the Open Space Plan should consider climate change as a critical component to protect natural resources. Wetland, floodplains, forests and grasslands all play an important role in offsetting the impacts associated with climate change. These natural resources are often times a more cost-effective means to mitigate climate change impacts as opposed to man-made techniques. The Committee agrees that sustaining both traditional and urban forest management techniques are highly valued and effective in combating climate change. Several

recommendations are offered by the RAC related to promoting sustainable, “green” infrastructure. Ideas range from traditional acquisition of lands that lend to passive use and recreation to promoting community-based smart-growth strategies that help reduce the pressure on open lands. Storm water is increasingly being used for cooling purposes in urban areas and captured for use for routine plumbing operations.

### **PAYMENT OF TAXES ON STATE LANDS**

As municipalities’ budgets are stretched, the need for stable and predictable revenue sources becomes paramount. While communities recognize the importance of open space conservation, removing property from tax rolls can create conflicts in priorities. Enabling legislation could address this issue by requiring that all acquisitions maintain tax revenue in the same manner as the land was considered under private ownership. Real property tax payments after State acquisition depends on the land classification under which the property is purchased. State Forest and Unique Areas continue local school and county tax payments. Wildlife Management Areas and State Parks typically do not pay real property taxes unless specific legislation is enacted. The Committee agrees that local governments can address this issue by working closely with their State legislators. Alternatively, implementing strategies that promote recreation and tourism is an important technique that could provide offset revenue by generating increased taxes on goods and services.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION IN URBAN AREAS**

Environmental Justice concerns, especially in urban areas, have a unique but important role in open space planning. Classic urban open space projects include pocket parks, bicycle paths and trail systems. Increasing open space in urban areas lends itself to not only diversifying the landscape but has an element of addressing issues related to climate change. However, Environmental Justice areas are not limited to urban settings. Many agricultural areas also qualify as Environmental Justice districts, adding to the importance of farmland protection. Several Committee members pointed out the difficulty in qualifying for grants where Environmental Justice criteria are required.

### **OUTDOOR RECREATION AND PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Improving access and signage on state-owned lands was a common recommendation made by the Committee as a means to promote outdoor recreation. Enhancing online information, literature and mapping that highlights resources, access points and amenities are the best tools for promoting the Region’s opportunities. The Watchable Wildlife program is a good example of how the DEC can promote outdoor recreation and provide information on New York’s natural resources. The Committee also stressed the need to keep information current and updated.

### **TOURISM**

The Committee feels that tourism is directly related to how New York promotes outdoor recreation (above). Improving access, restructuring sport licensing and seasons, and increasing youth hunting, fishing and camping opportunities are critical elements to a successful recreational tourism industry. Region 8 has a diversified ecosystem that should be promoted using modern-



day technologies and traditional media outlets. New York would benefit from a theme or narrative to collectively promote its State Parks. One such possible theme would be waterfalls. Niagara Falls is arguably the most famous waterfall (or group of waterfalls) in the world. This notoriety could be used as an anchor to a broader marketing program that promotes the many other State Parks that feature waterfalls such as Letchworth, Watkins Glen, Adirondack, Taughannock Falls, Minnewaska, Allegany, Chittenango Falls, Buttermilk Falls, Robert H. Treman, Taconic, Mine Kill and Pixley Falls.

The marketing program could allow for visitors to “collect” waterfalls in the same manner that hikers “collect” peaks in the Adirondack Mountains. A mobile platform app could be developed to allow visitors to check off each of the waterfalls that they have visited. In addition, funds could be raised by selling waterfall cards at the park offices in the style of baseball cards with photos, information and statistics (height, width, type, stream name, elevation, latitude and longitude) about each waterfall. Promotion via the internet, social media and brochures would serve to effectively advertise this and similar programs. This program could eventually be expanded to include the waterfalls at local municipal parks, and could spur the protection of, and public access to, the many waterfalls currently in private lands.

There are areas across New York that have a demonstrated track record of attracting tourism for both historic and natural resource attributes but sorely need resources to be sustainable. The former Seneca Army Depot is a prime example of an area that offers both historical and natural resource attributes and has a proven track record of a successful tourist attraction when offered.

### UNIVERSAL ACCESS

The DEC and OPRHP have made considerable progress in identifying and upgrading facilities to accommodate those with disabilities. Reaching out to groups whose primary focus is related to individuals with disabilities would promote continued enhancement to state-owned lands and facilities. Wider sidewalks, smoother surfaces and transition zones, hand railings and proper grading contribute to providing enjoyable experiences on New York lands. As with any program, construction and maintenance of accessible infrastructure must be adequately budgeted and staffed. Information provided through the internet combined with current mapping information would be a key component of this type of program.

### ENHANCING NEW YORK’S PARK SYSTEM

Enhancing New York’s park system blended with the discussion on stewardship (above). Recent increases in Park funding have helped improve New York’s system but they have focused primarily on a large backlog of infrastructure needs. Without adequate funding and staffing for acquisition of lands, recreational use planning and stewardship activities, New York’s parklands will fall short of the public’s expectations. This issue also links to the discussion on developing and utilizing partnerships with municipalities and other organizations, such as Friends Groups, to maximize and share available resources. As discussed under tourism and outdoor recreation, expanded and enhanced promotion of New York’s parklands using web-based resources and

hard-copy brochures would be of great benefit to the public and users of New York's park system.

**COMPREHENSIVE WILDIFE CONSERVATION PLAN**

DEC staff provided an update of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (CWCP), which was well received by the Committee. The key highlights of the plan are the identification of the approximately 700 wildlife species of greatest conservation need and how the CWCP will influence the 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan. The CWCP is used as scoring criteria when examining properties for acquisition. Several community education programs were held to advertise this and explain the CWCP initiative. More information regarding the CWCP can be found on the DEC's web page.

**FOREST ACTION PLAN**

The Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies or Forest Action Plan was discussed at the March meeting. Discussions centered on considering strategies and actions in the Forest Action Plan, such as retaining New York's forests and biodiversity that align with actions in the Open Space Plan. Both this presentation and that of the CWCP were appreciated by the Committee. Several of the county planners on the committee suggested that these presentations be included on the agenda for a future state-wide planning meeting. More information regarding this program can be found on the DEC's web page.

**WESTERN NEW YORK – REGION 9  
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**COUNTIES**

ALLEGANY, CATTARAUGUS, CHAUTAUQUA, ERIE, NIAGARA, WYOMING

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**COUNTY APPOINTEES**

<p><b>ALLEGANY COUNTY</b> Kier Dirlam Allegany County Planning Dept. 6087 NYS Route 19N Belmont, NY 14813 Phone: (585) 268-7472</p>	<p><b>CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY</b> Mark Geise Chautauqua County Department of Planning &amp; Economic Development 200 Harrison Street, Suite 300 Jamestown, NY 14701 Ph: (716) 661-8912</p>	<p><b>NIAGARA COUNTY</b> Appointment vacant</p>
<p><b>CATTARAUGUS COUNTY</b> Crystal J. Abers Cattaraugus County Dept. of Economic Development, Planning &amp; Tourism 303 Court Street Little Valley, NY 14706 Cattaraugus, NY 14719 Ph: (716) 938-2310</p>	<p><b>ERIE COUNTY</b> Tom Hersey Erie County Dept of Environment &amp; Planning 95 Franklin Street, Room 1077 Buffalo, NY 14202 Ph: (716) 858-7674</p>	<p><b>WYOMING COUNTY</b> John Copeland 5888 Sheppard Rd. Bliss, NY 14024 Ph: (585) 322-8800</p>

**STATE APPOINTEES**

<p>Rock Termini Buffalo Audubon Society, SAF, Seneca Trail RC&amp;D Council P.O. Box 145 East Otto, NY 14729 Ph: (716) 680-0322</p>	<p>Chris Schotz Niagara County Federation of Sportsmen Clubs 3468 Raymond Rd. Sanborn, NY 14132 Ph: (716) 731-1641</p>	<p>Zenon Olow Chautauqua County 23 Bennett Dr. Fredonia, NY 14063 Ph: (716) 672-2172</p>
<p>Patrick McGlew The Nature Conservancy 10 Main Street Cattaraugus, NY 14719 Ph: (716) 257-3689</p>	<p>Nancy Smith Western New York Land Conservancy P.O. Box 471 East Aurora, NY 14052 PH: (716) 687-1225</p>	<p>Art Klein – Sierra/ADK 43 Luksin Dr. Tonawanda, NY 14150 Ph: (716) 693-1082</p>
<p>Chuck Godfrey Erie County Federation of Sportsmen Clubs</p>		

**REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMENDATIONS**

29 Yvette Dr. Cheektowaga, NY 14227 Ph: (716) 440-6995		
--	--	--

**NYSOPRHP STAFF**

Mark Thomas, Western District Director Niagara Falls State Park P.O. Box 1132 Niagara Falls, NY 14308 Phone: (716) 278-1799	Jay Bailey, Allegany Regional Director Allegany State Park 2373 SAP Route 1, Suite 3 Salamanca, NY 14779 Ph: (716) 354-6575	Richard Parker, Genesee Region Director 1 Letchworth State Park Castile, NY 14427 Ph: (585) 493-3600
---	---	---

Ron Peters, Deputy General Manager Niagara Falls State Park P.O. Box 1132 Niagara Falls, NY 14308 Ph: (716) 278-1799		
--	--	--

**NYSDEC REGION 9 STAFF**

Abby Snyder, Regional Director 270 Michigan Ave. Buffalo, NY 14203 Ph: (716) 850-7201	Paul McKeown, Natural Resources Supervisor 182 East Union Street Allegany, N.Y. 14706 Ph: (716) 372-0645	Megan Gollwitzer, Public Affairs 270 Michigan Ave. Buffalo, NY 14203 Ph: (716) 851-7201
--	---	--

Jeff Nyitrai, Real Property Supervisor 182 East Union Street Allegany, N.Y. 14706 Ph: (716) 372-0645		
---	--	--

### MEETINGS

March 21, 2013; March 26, 2013; April 10, 2013; April 18, 2013;  
April 25, 2013; May 1, 2013; May 8, 2013; May 16, 2013; October 22, 2014

### INTRODUCTION

The initial Regional Open Space Advisory Committees (RAC) meeting was held at Concord Town Hall in Springville, where the RAC members were introduced and the county meeting schedule was set. Two follow-up meetings of the RAC were scheduled at Concord Town Hall to discuss recommendations resulting from the individual county meetings and to make any necessary changes to OSP categories. In total, six County meetings were held; one in Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany and Wyoming County. Each meeting opened with state representative and RAC member introductions and then proceeded with a power point presentation that reviewed the following topics:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Regional Advisory Committee
- Overview of the current plan
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Opportunities for public input and involvement

The remainder of each meeting was devoted to public input. A summary of each meeting is included at the end of this document under the heading "Western New York Meeting Minutes."

### REGION 9/ WESTERN NEW YORK CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Recommendations of the Region 9 Open Space Advisory Committee are summarized below. After reviewing the 2009 Open Space Plan and gathering input from stakeholders, the Committee has made updates to the existing plan. The Committee has the following priority recommendations:

1. ENHANCE RECREATIONAL AND PUBLIC ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES
2. IMPROVE MULTIUSE TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES
3. ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTIVITY
4. PROVIDE WATERSHED PROTECTION
5. CONSERVE BIRD HABITATS
6. SUPPORT FARMLAND AND FORESTLAND PRESERVATION
7. IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FEDERAL, STATE, MUNICIPAL, NOT-FOR-PROFIT GROUPS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR
8. SUPPORT OPEN SPACE PROJECTS IN URBAN AREAS/ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROJECTS
9. EDUCATE THE PUBLIC REGARDING BEST ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
10. ERADICATION/CONTROL OF INVASIVE SPECIES

#### A) GENERAL PLANNING, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 1. Enhance Recreational and Public Access Opportunities

The RAC supports the identification of all unused railroad corridors, their current owners and the potential conversion of these corridors into public trails. The RAC also recognized the

need to ease the landowner's liability in allowing trails on private property and to simplify the process of managing trail systems, including the development/maintenance of snowmobile trails.

For example, the Cattaraugus Local Development Corporation successfully completed the 12.4 mile Senator Pat McGee Trail that is getting tremendous usage. There is a move to convert a former rail line that runs from Orchard Park to Colden and on to West Valley. Also, Allegany Trails, Inc. has urged the State to complete the development of a 8.7 mile trail from Weidrick Road south of Wellsville to the Pennsylvania line for public use and enjoyment. Additional extensions are possible that would link the WAG Trail to the Genesee Valley Greenway to the north and Coudersport, Pa. to the south. This could increase use of both the Greenway and WAG Trails.

- The RAC supports Allegany County's new Comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan and the need for a state park in Allegany County.
- The RAC supports efforts to increase greater river access, and where possible, expand permitted public usage in state forest lands.
- The RAC supports the efforts of the Erie- Cattaraugus Rail Trail, which would include 27 miles of abandoned Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad (B&PRR) right-of-way from mile 8.4 Erie County to mile 36 Cattaraugus County in the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan.
- The RAC supports the efforts of Chautauqua County and the Friends of Chautauqua County Greenways as they implement projects recommended in their recently completed *Chautauqua County Greenway Plan* (including the Barcelona to Chautauqua Institution Multi-use Trail) and the Chautauqua County Equestrian Trail System being developed in the eastern part of the County and the Rail to Trail Project (Loco Trail) in the Town of Busti.

### **2. Improve Multi-Use Trail Opportunities**

The Committee supports efforts that enable a variety of uses on new or existing trail systems. These programs/projects are related to the creation and preservation of recreation and conservation corridors. Examples include projects involving trails for hiking, biking, jogging, horseback riding, and snowmobiling, XC skiing, snowshoeing, and rollerblading, as well as projects that involve waterways and lakes for canoeing and kayaking. The RAC recommends land use planning based on the important natural and ecological assets such as forests, wetlands and stream banks. Planning will also develop objectives for establishing trail towns that cater to users of this natural infrastructure.

### **3. Enhance Opportunities for Connectivity**

The Committee supports any opportunities for creating connectivity of open spaces or trail corridors that would enhance and connect existing trails, as well as provide connectivity for fish and wildlife habitat. This could include:

- "Daylighting" currently tunneled waterways
- Adding sections to link existing trails
- Protecting areas that are important for connecting fish and wildlife with critical habitat
- Educating municipalities and the public about ecological corridors and the wetland

permitting process. Encourage petitioning for wetland protection.

- Support fish communities by expanding access through the removal or modification of dams, culverts and other manmade barriers.

In addition, the RAC supports the protection of existing trailways and lineal corridors by acquiring fee title or conservation easements. Particular attention will be directed towards undeveloped linkages to existing trails. Examples would be unused or abandoned railroad corridors and existing trails that do not meet the criteria of long distance corridors. An example would be the WAG Trail in Allegany County as well as the Senator Pat McGee Trail in Cattaraugus County, The Chautauqua Rail to Trail in Chautauqua County, and the Chautauqua County Greenway. These trails should promote a variety of compatible uses in order to meet public demand for recreational trail use.

Projects include but are not limited to:

- Multi-use trails (trails capable of meeting a variety of compatible uses)
- Equestrian Trails
- Erie-Catt Rail Trail
- Niagara River Greenway
- Triple Divide and WAG
- WNY Greenway
- Chautauqua County Greenway System

#### 4. Provide Watershed Protection

The Committee supports watershed planning strategies that conserve open space in order to improve water quality. This can be achieved by returning lands to their natural functions; reducing developed impervious areas that negatively affect water quality, enhancing green infrastructure and vegetative buffers, preserving undeveloped properties, and reducing Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), of priority pollutants.

Watershed planning strategies should support natural area protection. Greater incentives should be provided to farmers (and other rural residents) to encourage the development of buffer systems along creek corridors, and to conserve wetlands, hedgerows and other ecologically important features. Smaller farming operations should have equal access to grants for developing management plans and best management practices to that of

Consolidated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

The Committee strongly supports watershed protection efforts, such as;

- Allegheny Watershed
  - Bear Lake
  - Cassadaga lakes
  - Chautauqua Lake
  - Findley Lake
- Niagara River Watershed
  - Tonawanda Creek
- Lake Erie Watershed (NYS portion)

- Buffalo River
- Cattaraugus Creek
- Lake Ontario
  - Genesee
- Encourage and expand buffers along lakes and waterways to minimize sedimentation and nutrient runoff. Help to control flooding and potentially provide access via recreational greenways.
- Conserve and enhance lakes, shore lands, tributary stream corridors, watershed wetlands and watershed forests in order to provide important ecological habitat, minimize runoff and reduce flooding.
- Educate the public regarding best management practices/programs as they pertain to achieving improvements in water quality. This information is offered by various government entities (county SWCD, Federal USDA, other?), farmers, and other pertinent parties.
- Identify critical needs and opportunities for stream buffering, especially on Erie County parkland that is already protected but at risk for degradation due to erosion.
- Protect and expand core forest areas resilient to climate change
- Acquire and protect critical headwater forest areas
- Acquire, protect and restore land to support living infrastructure aimed at reducing the effect of storms and flooding on human and natural communities

### 5. **Conserving Bird Habitats**

The RAC recognizes the need to preserve and enhance important bird habitat areas and protect Important Bird Areas as critical open space. Some examples of important bird habitat include;

- Niagara River (above and below falls)
- Chadakoin River (Chautauqua Lake Outlet)
- Lake Erie escarpment
- Chautauqua Lake

### 6. **Farmland and Forestland Preservation**

Healthy forests are vital to New York's rural economies and the environmental well-being of the state. Voluntary actions that enable private forest owners to restrict future uses of their forestland to those compatible with open space planning may produce multiple public benefits. The USDA Forest Service Legacy Program (FLP) is one such voluntary program. Currently, no designated Forest Legacy Area (FLA) in Region 9 exists under the FLP, precluding its use for protecting and maintaining intact forests.

The RAC recommends that New York State work with USDA to expand existing FLAs to include the Allegheny Plateau (Region 9). If this is achieved it will provide an additional tool to promote retention and wise use of the area's private forestland.

The RAC stresses the importance of preserving farmland and working forests by utilizing



conservation easements, the New York State Farmland Protection Program, the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and the Federal Forest Legacy. The Committee encourages municipal open space bond efforts. For example, the Clarence Greenprint program.

The Committee supports providing resources to assist with the development of long-term management plans that ensure sustainable practices for both private and public forests. Incentives and/or resources for protecting and implementing management plans for private forests should be offered for tracts smaller than 50 contiguous acres since these smaller tracts do not qualify for NYS Forest Tax Law incentive.

### **7. Improve Partnerships and Communications**

The RAC suggests that DEC and OPRHP further interface with other agencies, municipalities, the private sector and not-for-profits interested in protecting open space so that common goals can be pursued. For example, the state could purchase wetlands currently enrolled in the federal Wetland Reserve Program and use more conservation easements to protect open space.

### **8. Support Open Space Projects in Urban Areas/Environmental Justice Projects**

The RAC supports efforts to provide more open space and access in urban areas and waterfront, such as:

- Community Gardens
- Urban Farms
- Urban forestry
- Access to pocket parks
- Waterfront access in urban areas
- “Daylighting” presently tunneled waterways

Community garden projects represent tremendous potential partnership opportunities between state, municipal, and local community groups. Especially in the Buffalo area, there are multiple groups in which partnership efforts to promote community gardens could be pursued, given the appropriate open space program mechanisms and guidance. Community garden projects in Buffalo are currently completed on properties leased by community groups from the city. Obtaining ownership of these properties continues to be a challenge for local community garden groups and could represent an opportunity for assistance through the state’s Open Space Plan.

The RAC also supports efforts to enhance waterfront access and preserve habitat in urban areas, such as the Chadakoin Riverwalk in the City of Jamestown and the Lakefront Walk in Dunkirk which offer recreational potential and teaching opportunities to the local community

### **9. Educate Public Regarding Best Environmental Management Practices**

Greater incentives should be provided to farmers (and other rural residents) to encourage the installation of buffer systems along creek corridors, and to conserve wetlands, hedgerows and other ecologically important features. Smaller farming operations should have equal access to support in terms of developing management plans and best management practices to that of larger Consolidated Animal Feeding Operations.

## 10. Eradication of Invasive Species

The RAC supports efforts to eradicate invasive species that threaten the sustainability or health of open space areas and important habitats. The RAC favors projects that include partnerships and actions that reduce and/or eliminate the introduction of new aquatic invasive species. Possible opportunities are outlined in the *Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study* and include regulations regarding drainage from the Mississippi River, careful planning of fish passage projects, and public education. Support partnership efforts to remove invasive species and restore habitat in areas where invasive species have been identified, such as the Erie Canal Corridor's Tonawanda Creek area where hydrilla has been identified as a concern.

## B) FISCAL AND FUNDING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Enhance Recreational and Public Access Opportunities

- Provide and support financial/tax incentives for large and small land acquisition and/or the granting of temporary and permanent easements to encourage land owners to grant access across their land for the provision of recreational and natural access corridors.
- Provide Incentives and technical assistance for municipalities to develop, alter and/or implement ordinances that reduce barriers to public access, create conservation easements, and incentivize best stormwater management practices.

### 2. Improve Multi-Use Trail Opportunities

- Provide funding for the procurement of gross negligence insurance to protect landowners for all types of trails, similar to that which is provided by the State to protect landowners granting access to their land for snowmobile trails.

### 3. Enhance Opportunities for Connectivity

- Provide workers comp insurance on privately owned land for volunteers doing work on these lands as they currently do in the state-owned lands.
- The State should apply uniform tax abatement on former corridors and acquire ownership so that local municipalities can turn them into usable trails for public land stewardship.

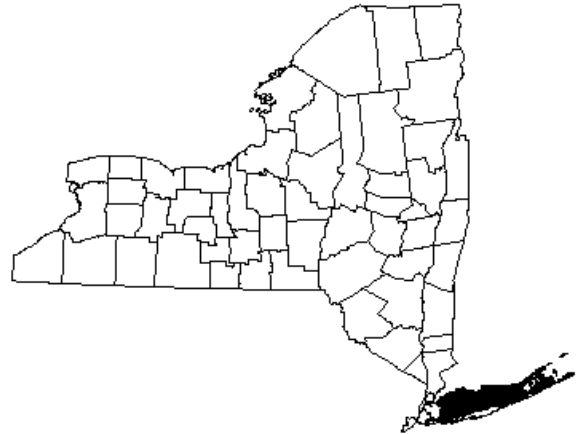
### 4. Provide Watershed Protection

- Provide financial incentives for property owners adjacent to streams and lakes to create buffers, natural stream bank and shoreline habitats, and stabilization projects.
- Provide financial incentives for private and public landowners in impaired watersheds to better manage their storm water by installing rain barrels, rain gardens, pervious surfaces, catch basins, dry ponds, etc.
- Provide financial incentives for private and public landowners in impaired watersheds to upgrade septic systems or connect to public sewer utilities where possible.
- The RAC encourages the State to purchase wetlands currently enrolled in the federal Wetland Reserve Program.
- Address stream buffering with minimal funding by adopting park-specific management plans and developing stewardship groups to perform maintenance and monitoring to help prevent further degradation of water in riparian areas

- Work with partners to examine places, methods and financing vehicles for accelerating the implementation of living infrastructure aimed at reducing the effect of storms and flooding on human and natural communities.
- 5. Conserve Bird Habitats**
    - Provide and support financial incentives for conserving critical bird habitat where demonstrated public or natural benefit can be demonstrated.
  - 6. Farmland and Forestland Preservation**
    - The RAC stresses the importance of farmland and working forest preservation and the need to utilize conservation easements to accomplish these protections, as well as other tools including the New York State Farmland Protection Program, the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and the Federal Forest Legacy.
    - The Committee encourages municipal open space bond efforts. For example, the Clarence Greenprint program.
    - Support financial incentives for landowners with large forested land holdings to reduce segmentation and the selling off of land for development. The RAC supports efforts to reduce forest fragmentation in Chautauqua County so that we can maintain, enhance and expand important forested corridors, including the Allegheny Plateau.
    - Provide resources to assist with the development of long-term management plans that ensure sustainable practices for both private and public forests. Incentives and/or resources for protecting and implementing management plans for private forests should be offered to tracts smaller than 50 contiguous acres, which is the requirement to be eligible for the NYS Forest Tax Law.
  - 7. Improve Partnerships and Communications Between Federal, State, Municipal and Not for Profit Groups and the Private Sector**
    - The RAC recommends that NYS DEC and OPRHP improve their interaction with other agencies, municipalities, the private sector and not-for-profits interested in protecting open space so that common goals can be discussed.
  - 8. Support Open Space Projects in Urban Areas/Environmental Justice Projects**
    - Provide financial incentives to convert vacant once-developed lands to their natural state and/or community gardens.
    - Provide funding for projects in urban areas to increase open space conservation, the creation of recreational corridors and improve access.
  - 9. Educate Public Regarding Best Environmental Management Practices**
    - Provide funding to help educate the public, private and municipal entities regarding projects and best open space management practices.
    - Provide funding to develop local open space management plans.
  - 10. Eradication of Invasive Species**
    - Provide State funding to identify and eradicate invasive plants and animals on land and in the water.

# STATE AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

## LONG ISLAND



### STATEWIDE

#### **NYS DEC**

Division of Lands & Forests  
625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233-4250  
Ph: (518) 402-9405

#### **NYS OPRHP – Planning Bureau**

625 Broadway  
Albany NY, 12238  
Ph: (518) 474-8288  
TDD: (518) 486-1899

#### **NYS HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

Peebles Island Resource Center  
P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189  
Ph: (518) 237-8643

#### **NYS DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

99 Washington Avenue, Suite 1010  
Albany, NY 12231-0001  
Ph: (518) 474-6000

#### **NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS**

10B Airline Drive  
Albany, NY 12235  
Ph: (518) 457-7076

#### **NYS ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY**

P.O. Box 99  
1133 NYS Route 86  
Ray Brook, NY 12977  
Ph: (518) 891-4050

NASSAU

SUFFOLK

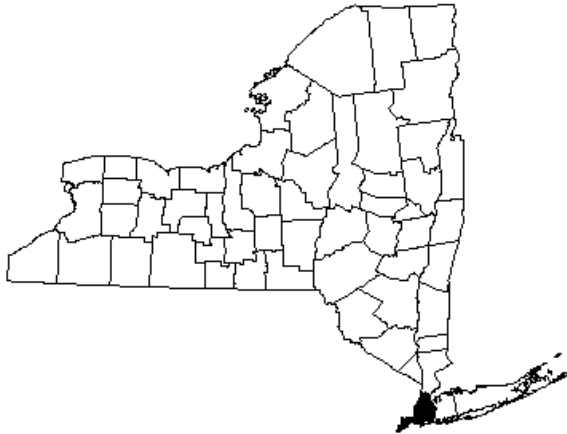
#### **NYS DEC – Region 1 Headquarters**

SUNY @ Stony Brook  
50 Circle Road  
Stony Brook, NY 11790-3409  
Ph: (631) 444-0200

#### **NYS OPRHP – Long Island Park Region**

Belmont Lake State Park  
Box 247  
Babylon, NY 11702-0247  
Ph: (631) 669-1000

NEW YORK CITY

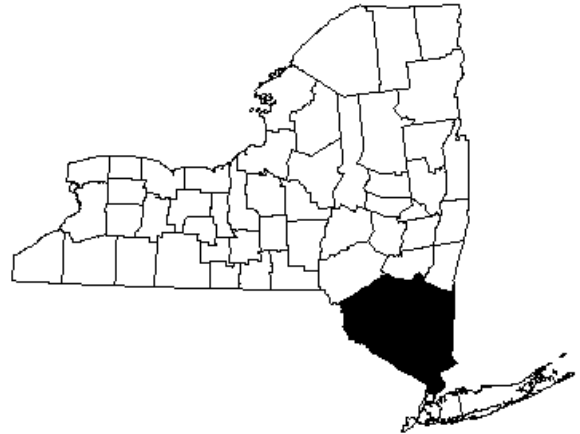


- BRONX
- KINGS
- BROOKLYN*
- NEW YORK
- MANHATTAN*
- QUEENS
- RICHMOND
- STATEN ISLAND*

**NYS DEC** – Region 2 Headquarters  
1 Hunters Point Plaza  
47 – 40 21st Street  
Long Island City, NY 11101–5401  
Ph: (718) 482–4900

**NYS OPRHP** – New York City Park Region  
Adam Clayton Powel Jr. State Office Bldg.  
163 West 125th Street, 17th Floor  
NY, NY 10027  
Ph: (212) 866–3100

LOWER HUDSON VALLEY



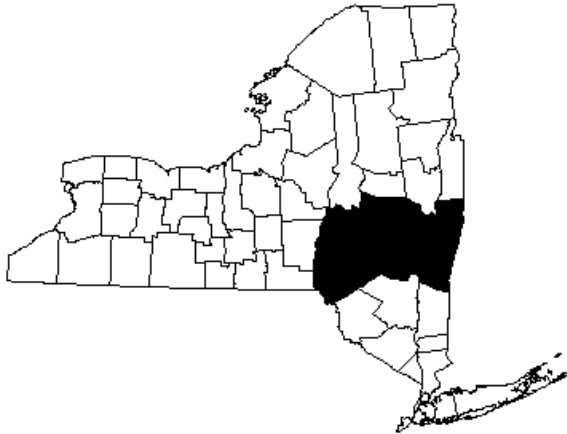
- DUTCHESS
- ORANGE
- PUTNAM
- ROCKLAND
- SULLIVAN
- ULSTER
- WESTCHESTER

**NYS DEC** – Region 3 Headquarters  
21 South Putt Corners Road  
New Paltz, NY 12561–1696  
Ph: (845) 256–3000

**NYS OPRHP** – Taconic Park Region  
Old Post Road  
P.O. Box 308  
Staatsburg, NY 12580  
Ph: (914) 889–4100

**NYSOPRHP** – Palisades Interstate Park  
Commission  
Administration Building  
Bear Mountain, NY 10911–0427  
Ph: (845) 786–2701

CAPITAL REGION

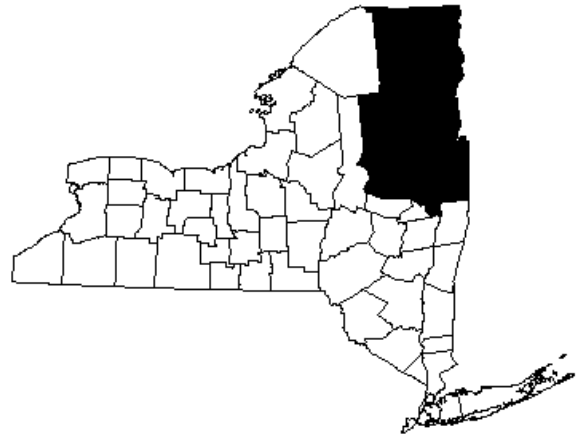


- ALBANY
- COLUMBIA
- DELAWARE
- GREENE
- MONTGOMERY
- OTSEGO
- RENSSELAER
- SCHENECTADY
- SCHOHAIRE

**NYS DEC** – Region 4 Headquarters  
1130 N. Westcott Road  
Schenectady, NY 12306-2014  
Ph: (518) 357-2068

**NYS OPRHP** – Saratoga/Capital District  
Park Region  
19 Roosevelt Drive  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-6214  
Ph: (518) 584-2000

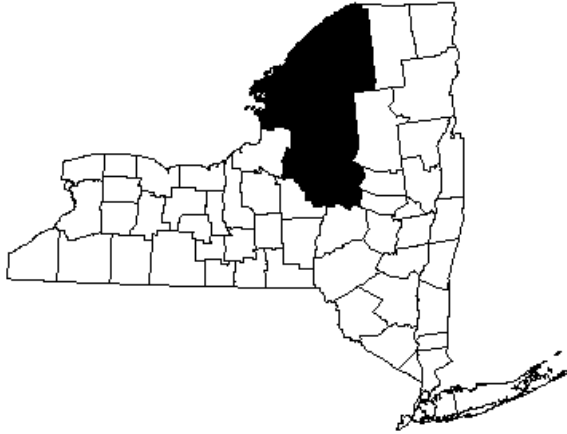
EASTERN ADIRONDACKS –  
LAKE CHAMPLAIN



- CLINTON
- ESSEX
- FRANKLIN
- FULTON
- HAMILTON
- SARATOGA
- WARREN
- WASHINGTON

**NYS DEC** – Region 5 Headquarters  
1115 Route 86, P.O. Box 296  
Ray Brook, NY 12977-0296  
Ph: (518) 897-1200

WESTERN ADIRONDACKS –  
EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO –  
UPPER MOHAWK VALLEY

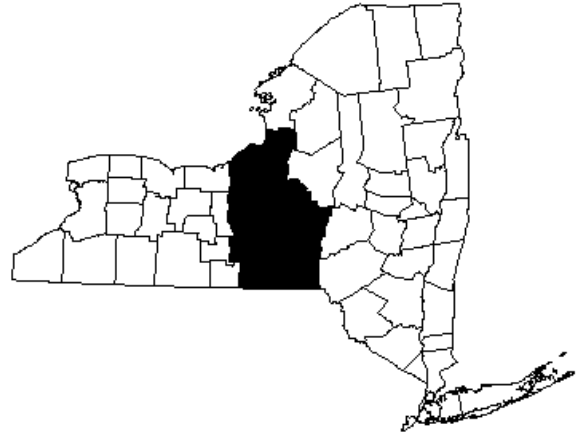


HERKIMER  
JEFFERSON  
LEWIS  
ONEIDA  
ST. LAWRENCE

**NYS DEC** – Region 6 Headquarters  
317 Washington Street  
Watertown, NY 13601-3787  
Ph: (315) 785-2239

**NYS OPRHP** – Thousand Islands Park Region  
Keewaydin State Park  
Alexandria Bay, NY 13607  
Ph: (315) 482-2593

CENTRAL NEW YORK



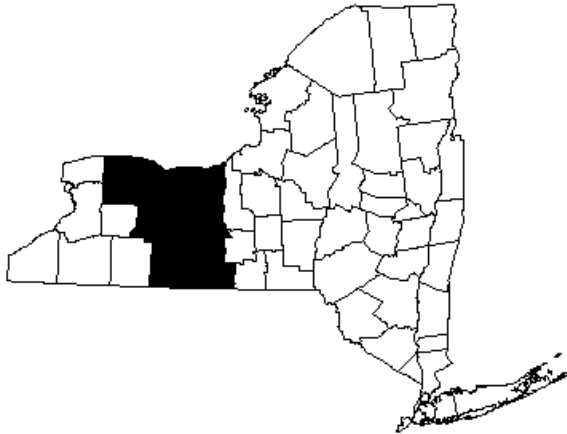
BROOME  
CAYUGA  
CHENANGO  
CORTLAND  
MADISON  
OSWEGO  
ONONDAGA  
TIOGA  
TOMPKINS

**NYS DEC** – Region 7 Headquarters  
615 Erie Boulevard West  
Syracuse, NY 13204-2400  
Ph: (315) 426-7400

**NYS OPRHP** – Central New York Park Region  
6105 E. Seneca Turnpike  
Jamesville, NY 13078-9516  
Ph: (315) 492-1756

**NYS OPRHP** – Finger Lakes Park Region  
2221 Taughannock Park Road  
P.O. Box 1055  
Trumansburg, NY 14886-1055  
Ph: (607) 387-7041

WESTERN FINGER LAKES



CHEMUNG

SCHUYLER

GENESEE

SENECA

LIVINGSTON

STEBEN

MONROE

WAYNE

ONTARIO

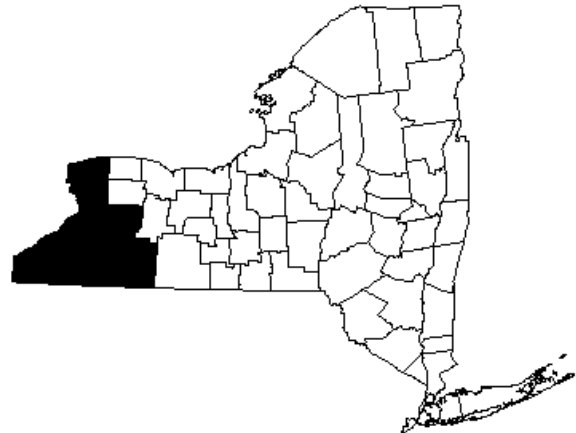
YATES

ORLEANS

**NYS DEC** – Region 8 Headquarters  
6274 E. Avon-Lima Rd  
Avon, NY 14414-9519  
Ph: (585) 226-2466

**NYS OPRHP** – Genesee Park Region  
1 Letchworth State Park  
Castile, NY 14427-1124  
Ph: (585) 493-3600

WESTERN NEW YORK



ALLEGANY

CATTARAUGUS

CHAUTAUQUA

ERIE

NIAGARA

WYOMING

**NYS DEC** – Region 9 Headquarters  
270 Michigan Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14203-2915  
Ph: (716) 851-7201

**NYS OPRHP** – Allegany State Park Region  
Allegany State Park  
2373 ASP Route 1 Suite 3  
Salamanca, NY 14779  
Ph: (716) 354-9101

**NYS OPRHP** – Niagara Frontier Park Region  
Prospect Park  
P.O. Box 1132  
Niagara Falls, NY 14303-1132  
Ph: (716) 278-1770



### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks go to the extensive volunteer efforts of the members of the nine Regional Advisory Committees without whose contributions and support in partnership with DEC and OPRHP's hard-working regional staff this Plan would not be possible.

Thanks also go to DEC central office staff led by Jeffrey Mapes, Gloria VanDuyne and Francis Sheehan, with assistance from Briana Gary, Regina Willis and Dylan Walrath, for their efforts bringing together the work of the Regional Advisory Committees and giving the Plan a fresh look.

Thanks also go to: Debra Nelson and Thomas Benware from the Department of Transportation; Bob Somers, David Behm and Brian Steinmuller from the Department of Agriculture and Markets; Diana Carter from the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation; and Andrew Labruzzo from the Department of State.