Meet the People Making Local Conservation Happen:

**Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!**

Part One: Forests and Fields

* * * *

6:00 – 6:20: Welcome! Enjoy locally grown tastes and hot cider, explore displays.


7:30 – 8:00: Q & A with our speakers.

8:15 - Stay for a Guided Crescent Moon Hike!

(Part Two: Farmland, June 13th 6-8PM at Indian Ladder Farms)
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Event Co-sponsors

- Towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland
- Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
- Delmar Farmers Market
- Albany County
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Friends of Five Rivers
Enjoy local tastes!

Thank you to Field Notes and Indian Ladder Farms

**Field Notes:**
- Farm-to-table chefs: Joan Porambo, Kyle MacPherson
- Food sourced from Lansing Farm in Colonie
- 20-acre farm just conserved with MHLC!
- Visit them for Saturday dinners and Sunday brunches, and find their food truck at events
  - [www.fieldnotes-ny.com](http://www.fieldnotes-ny.com)

**Indian Ladder Farm:**
- Hot apple cider from New Scotland apples
  - [www.indianladderfarms.com](http://www.indianladderfarms.com)
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Thank you to our speakers for sharing their conservation stories:

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2. Mark King, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
3. Jeff Leon, Strawberry Fields landowner
4. Lauren Axford, Pine Hollow Arboretum
5. Steve Downs, landowner
6. Mike Knutson, Scenic Hudson
7. Kris Sigsby, landowner
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Thank you to our speakers for sharing their conservation stories:
What is “Open Space”? 
RECREATION
(State Forests and Parks, Preserves, Private Lands Trails Access)
EDUCATION

Community Forests; interpretive trails
NATURAL RESOURCES
(preserves, state forests and parks, conservation easements)
Ecological Conservation
“HUMAN” RESOURCES
(working forest easements, farmland easements)
Food Production
Forest Products
Examples: Working Forest Easements, Community Forests
Drinking Water

- **Case Study: City of Amsterdam, Hans Creek**
- **Town of Bethlehem**
  - Vly Creek Reservoir Watershed: Lake, wetlands 12.3%; Agricultural 15.8%; Forest, shrub, grasses 65.2%; Residential 6.7%
  - Vly Creek Reservoir located in Town of New Scotland, but is large source of Bethlehem drinking water
What is needed for conservation to work?

- Benefit of conservation must outweigh the cost ($$, natural resources vs development)

- Partnerships:
  - Need an interested landowner
  - Need an entity to hold the conservation easement or land - land conservancy, municipality, state entity

- Need $$$ (even for donations)

- Time: some projects take decades (easement terms, grant awards, negotiation process, estate planning)

- Community support: Some projects are reliant on community as partner - community forests, local...
How can non-profits and municipalities help private landowners?

- Connections to conservation-minded forest and farm land buyers and sellers
- Identification of $ sources for easements
- Advocate for state funding for working forest easement $$
- Partnership with Towns on OS projects
- Purchases of conservation lands to establish preserves or parklands
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(Part Two: Farmland, June 13th 6-8PM at Indian Ladder Farms)
Fisher Boulevard - Fiver Rivers Expansion
A 35 acre property donation

In a rapidly growing area
Communications - get the word out

Share the success
Celebrating Success!
Meet the People Making Local Conservation Happen: *Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!*  
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Thank you to our speakers for sharing their conservation stories:
Strawberry Fields
Located in the Town of Amsterdam, Eastern Montgomery County

Its 118 acres are protected in perpetuity from overdevelopment
- Operates on a net zero sustainable basis
- Contains a family home, working farm, and nature preserve with public trails.
We started on the road to net-zero in 2003. We arrived in 2013.

This is the condensed story of how we changed our lives to mitigate climate change.
Strawberry Fields is a multi-use home for the Leon Family. Over the 10 years, 2 blower door tests and insulation have tightened up this 120 year old house.
Strawberry Fields is run on renewable energy, the key to net zero. The first array installed in 2009 generates 12 KW.
The second array is a ground mount and generates 13 KW.
- Both arrays have paid back their costs in savings.
- All future generation from these arrays is zero cost.
- They will last longer than me!
Renewable Energy

The second key to net zero is swapping out fossil fuel for renewable electric:

• Two electric cars.
• Converted our propane home heating to geothermal that runs on an electric heat pump;
• our propane water heater to a heat pump water heater;
• property maintenance is now done on an electric ATV rather than tractor.
• Lawn is mowed with lithium ion zero turn mower.
• Chainsaw and weed whacker are electric.

This is our second electric car, the Chevy Bolt.
Lovin’ Mama Farm

Strawberry Fields also has a working farm run by son and daughter-in-law.

- USDA organic certified
- No-till agriculture
- vegetable and flower farm
- Community Supported Agriculture
You’ll hear more about Lovin’ Mama Farm at the next “Meet the People” event on June 13th that’s all about conserving farmland!
Strawberry Fields is also a nature preserve:

- 118 acres permanently protected by a Conservation Easement held by Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
- Three miles of nature trails are open to the public all year
- Anyone can enjoy what Strawberry Fields has to offer
- Thousands have visited since the trail was officially open to the public in 2017
- We offer workshops and special events
Fringed Gentian

• This is my favorite wildflower...
• More than 300 different plant species have been identified on the land.
• The Gentian is hard to find these days.
• A spur trail is available to see it in bloom during September and October.
Cardinal flower and Trout lily

Two more favorite flowers of mine.
Wonderful bird-watching:

There are over 100 species of birds at Strawberry Fields.

The American Bluebird is a favorite.
CANADA GEESE TAKING OFF FROM THE WETLAND
The Grandkid Conservation Corps!

- Headed out to plant American Chestnut seedlings.
- We added another species to Strawberry Fields where we expect to re-establish the American Chestnut that until a century ago dominated the eastern landscape.
- (Yes, that’s the electric ATV!)
THANKS FOR VISITING STRAWBERRY FIELDS!
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Founder Dr. John W. Abbuhl began planting trees around his private residence over 50 years ago.

- Horticultural collection of over 3,600 unique trees, shrubs, and other wood plants from around the world.
- 11 ponds, Eastern White Pine forest, and a network of trails.
- Free and open to the public 365 days a year from dawn until dusk.
• Dr. Abuhl purchased the adjacent parcel of land and, in his words, began “letting the land tell me what to do
• Grounds are managed in nuanced way that encourages the natural ecosystem and respects the inherent qualities of the land
• Today, The Pine Hollow Arboretum manages approximately 22 acres, with several neighbors allowing plantings on their adjacent properties.
Looking forward.....

• Continue to build our organizational infrastructure
• Increase accessibility (parking, ADA accessible areas)
• Continue to develop horticultural collection
• Improve maps/establish new trail loops
• Expand our environmental education program
• Continue to preserve and enhance this unique beautiful community asset for the benefit of ALL!
34 Pine Hollow Road
Slingerlands, NY 12159
518-992-2033
pinhellowerb@gmail.com
www.pinehollowarboretum.org
Meet the People Making Local Conservation Happen: *Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!*
Part One: Forests and Fields

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Downs land:
• Total about 17 acres
• 10 acres to be sold to Town as parkland expansion
• Dinmore Road

Vlomankill, tributary of the Hudson River

Henry Hudson Park owned by Bethlehem, borders the Hudson River
A win-win local conservation project

- I’m selling 10 acres of my total 17 acres for conservation
- Will protect 1,600 feet of Vloman Kill shoreline
- Important Hudson River Estuary wildlife and fisheries habitat, flood protection, recreation
Unique land:

- Always felt this land should be conserved
- History, ecology, recreation
- Very unique property, bordered by tidal creek - Vloman Kill - that flows into the nationally significant Hudson River
- Connected to Bethlehem’s Henry Hudson Park via the creek
Conservation process:

- Started about a year ago talking with Town
- Brought in two non-profit conservation organizations
  - Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
  - Scenic Hudson
- Decided to sell a 10 acre portion of land along the Vloman Kill as an expansion of Town’s Henry Hudson Park
- Enhances the value of remaining adjacent property
- Costs for making conservation happen can be difficult to cover
- Costs were shared by Town, SH, MHLC (about $7,500 total)
  - Survey of the line to divide parcel,
  - Appraisal to determine fair value of land to be sold,
  - Environmental assessment.

Margot’s Meadow

Site visit with Town, Scenic Hudson, and Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
Conservation process:

- Scenic Hudson, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, and Town to share land purchase costs.
- Town will use Parkland Set Aside Fund.
- Land will be conserved as parkland, added to Henry Hudson Park, and managed by Town.
As new addition to Bethlehem’s Henry Hudson Park:

• New walking trails, vistas for park users
• (Not open yet - coming soon!)
• Land access will include mowed trails established by my family
• gorgeous views of the creek as it flows toward the Hudson River

View of the Vloman Kill falls after a rainstorm from “Roger’s Rock”

Walking path in woods
As new addition to Bethlehem’s Henry Hudson Park:

- New water access from the Vloman Kill
- Popular kayak launch at Henry Hudson park (new in 2014)
- Fun to see the falls from Roger’s Rock on the land, or from the creek by boat!
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OUR MISSION

Scenic Hudson preserves land and farms and creates parks that connect people with the inspirational power of the Hudson River, while fighting threats to the river and natural resources that are the foundation of the valley’s prosperity.
Working with conservation-minded landowners, Scenic Hudson has conserved a 535 acre assemblage of land where the Binnen Kill meets the Hudson River.

- Five acquisitions with a total approximate value of $2.4M; a mixture of donations & purchases with SH endowment funds.
- Nearly half of this assemblage is owned by Scenic Hudson; the remaining acreage is owned by private parties and is protected with conservation easements.
WHY PROTECT THE BINNEN KILL?

**CONSERVATION VALUES**

- Fertile agricultural soils with centuries of active farm use.
- Scenic views from the Hudson River, River Road, and the Castleton-on-Hudson Bridge.
- Ecological communities – such as freshwater tidal wetlands, riparian floodplain forest along the Binnen Kill, and submerged aquatic vegetation – which provide habitat for a myriad of sensitive bird, fish, and plant species.
HOW DID WE GET HERE?

OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSISTENCE

↑ Building relationships with landowners and finding common goals.

↑ Finding opportunities to partner with public and private entities.

↑ Our work in the Binnen Kill area started in 1986 – successful conservation projects require patience!

↑ There is still more work to do!
Climate change is causing sea levels to rise.
As the tidally-influenced Hudson River rises, the additional water will need somewhere to go!
Wetlands help to mitigate impacts from rising water levels and increasing storm events.
Scenic Hudson will continue to look for opportunities to work with local partners and willing landowners to protect critical wetland migration pathways.
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Thank you to our speakers for sharing their conservation stories:
Bender Lane
The Why...

For us, the Bethlehem Conservation Easement Exemption program was a no-brainer. We enjoy looking out our window and seeing this 11-acre forest, unencumbered by houses, street lights, driveways and cars, knowing that the land is home to countless wildlife and plant species, a pristine creek, wetlands, and tranquil solitude.

We decided to conserve our forest in perpetuity, which gave us a 90% tax exemption on this land.
Protecting our wildlife habitats is our primary concern....
The Process....

- The uniqueness of our parcel
- Clear and concise communication with the Town representatives
- Simple-language contract: “Conservation Easement Agreement” between us as landowners and the Town of Bethlehem
- Paperwork prepared in a timely manner
- Proposals to Boards well researched and presented by Rob Leslie, Director of Economic Development and Planning, and Karen Shaw, Open Space Coordinator
Into the woods....
future hiking and biking trails?

Perhaps future partnerships might open this area to the public and possibly connect to other conservancy lands like the MHLC Schiffendecker Farm Preserve
Everyone loves driving down Bender Lane, in all four seasons. Now, part of this scenic view will be protected forever!
Bender Lane is even beautiful during the fall when...... you didn’t realize your camera was loaded with black & white film.
We recommend Bethlehem’s Conservation Easement Exemption program to other interested landowners. Save money while saving the land! Give them a call.
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Giles Wagoner, Forester

• Forests provide clean air, clean water, forest products, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty.

• Private landowner stewardship of forest ecosystems is critical.
Forest Facts:

• Most common forest types are birch/beech/maple (53% of forest land area)

• Economic importance of NYS forests
  • $300 million annually to private landowners for logging
My forested land:

- 70 acres of forest in Selkirk - diverse and healthy
- Harvest takes place only about every 20-25 years

Northern Red Oak, Quercus rubra
NYS Forest Tax Law Program, or “480-a”

• Tax relief program through a partnership with New York State

• Voluntary property assessment reduction (80%) program that supports sustainable forestry management

• I was the first participating landowner in Albany County!
NYS Forest Tax Law Program, or “480-a”

- Need at least 50 acres of contiguous forest
- Commit to a 10 year management plan prepared by professional forester (costs $)
  - Identifies scheduled tree harvests, noncommercial thinnings, etc. (harvest every 15-20 years or so)
- Management plan approved by NYSDEC Regional Forester
- Annual recommitment
- While enrolled, cannot develop land or subdivide land - land is conserved

Northern Red Oak, Quercus rubra
NYS Forest Tax Law Program, or “480-a”

• Receive 80% reduction in your assessed value of the property (local, county, school taxes).
• If you want to get out of the commitment, there is a financial penalty of paying back the tax benefit you received over past 10 years.
• File with deed with the County, so acts as an easement that runs with the land.
• Forest land is essentially conserved through the stewardship of the forester/landowner.
• Benefits the timber industry in NYS, while ensuring sustainable forestry practices.
• Supports wildlife management and bird watching - ruffed grouse, song birds, woodpeckers, owls, etc.

White oak, Quercus alba
Thank you!

Happy to answer questions and serve as a resource for other forest owners.
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Meet the People Making Local Conservation Happen: Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!

Part One: Forests and Preserves
Thursday, February 7th | 6:00 PM
What is a Land Bank?

Land banks are nonprofit entities that work in collaboration with community members and local government to revitalize neighborhoods by returning vacant, abandoned or tax foreclosed properties back to productive use.

Land banks are a local solution to a national crisis.
Land banks can function as a platform that brings together multiple partners to facilitate community revitalization and create new opportunities!
There are 25 Land Banks in New York State (legislative cap was increased to 35 in December 2018)
Nearly all property acquisitions to date are tax-foreclosed properties from Albany County.
A Land Bank property in the Town of Rensselaerville
A Land Bank property in the Town of Knox
Vacant Lot Transformations
Vacant Lot Transformations
Working with Municipalities to Support Open Space Conservation: Wemple Road, Town of Bethlehem, NY

8 acres owned by the Albany Co Land Bank to be sold to the Town for $1
THANK YOU!

www.albanycountylandbank.org
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Thank you to our speakers for sharing their conservation stories:
Community Forests
Key Aspects of Community Forests:

- Owned in fee by municipality or land trust for the benefit of the community
- Open to public free of charge for outdoor recreation and education
- Provides benefits to community, both economic and non-economic, through forest management, water supply protection, outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat (ecosystem services)
- Community involvement in management and use of forest
Why We Support Community Forests:

- Not possible for State to conserve all of our wonderful natural resources
- Recognize importance of the forest resource
- There is a need to connect people with nature
- Community Forests have proven to be highly successful for many years in other parts of the country.
- The Towns of New Scotland and Bethlehem could use community forests to promote public outdoor recreation, ecosystem protection, economic benefit and community spirit and involvement
DEC and Community Forest Support

- Continue State Forester’s role to advocate for more community forestry funding in the state budget and US Forest Service Budget
- Consider having DEC or a local land trust purchase working forest conservation easements on community forests
- Governor Cuomo has proposed a new grant program in state Environmental Protection Fund to provide $3 million for land trusts for the purchase of working forest conservation easements
Planning for a Community Forest

Community Engagement First

2011 - Idea
2012 - Learning
2013 - Public Workshop, Committee Formed, Search for Land
2014 - Contract, Grant, Closing
RPA’s Approach

Community Management/Oversight

Committee of Community Members

- Decisions about activities and uses (with guidance)
- Rallying and coordinating volunteers, building trails, etc.
- Programs, outings and pet projects
- Fundraising to support activities
- Advise and request funds from RPA’s Board of Directors
What’s Happening

Forest Management Plan
- Model Forest
- Planned Harvests
- Workshops
- Training for Forest Professionals
- Trails - lots of trails, bridges
- Mountain Bike trails & skills park
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Part of a Larger Landscape Initiative
Part of a Larger Landscape Initiative
## Funding and Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYS Conservation Partnership Program, NYS Environmental Protection Fund and Land Trust Alliance</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising from individuals</td>
<td>$312,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Kind Volunteer Time</td>
<td>$60,000 +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jim Bonesteel**  
(518) 712-9211  
jim@rensselaerplateau.org  
I am always happy to talk about Community Forests!
Questions and Answers
Where do we go from here?

- People
- Partnerships
- Funding
THIS SPRING - PART TWO:
Meet the People Making Local Conservation Happen:
*Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!*

“Farmland Conservation”

**Thursday, June 13th**
6:00-8:00PM
At Indian Ladder Farms
In the Apple Barn
Guided Farm Tour before the program: 5:00-5:45PM!
Thank you!

8:15 - 9:00

Bundle up and join a Guided Crescent Moon Hike with Five Rivers Staff!

Enjoy the trails!