

Meet the People Making Local Conservation Happen: Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!

Part One: “Forests and Fields”

Save the date - Part Two: “Conserving Farmland”, June 13th, 6-8PM at Indian Ladder Farms!



WELCOME! Thank you for joining us! Many of us agree that the conservation of our local forests and fields is important. Understanding **how** this undeveloped land gets conserved and stays “forever green” can be complex and unique, involving interested landowners, conservation partners, funding sources, and often community support.

Each of our ten speakers tonight will help to “unpeel the onion” of how local conservation can happen with their unique conservation stories. We thank them for sharing their enthusiasm and experiences so that we may take home new ideas for continued successful local conservation. A brief description and contact information for each speaker is below. Time for questions and answers with our speakers will follow the talks.

Thank you for your interest in conservation - enjoy!

Thank you to our speakers for sharing their conservation stories:

Katie Petronis, Northern Program Director, Open Space Institute: Since 1974, the Open Space Institute (OSI) has protected 200,000 acres of forests, fields, and farmland in New York State. Through direct land acquisition and conservation easements with landowners, OSI protects critical open space habitats, recreation areas, family farms, historic sites, and partners with local and state government to expand their parklands. OSI protects land that supports the things we can’t live without – clean water, climate protection, and healthy communities – and safeguards the places that make life worth living, like parks for recreation and plant and animal habitat. Nearby projects supported by OSI include Indian Ladder Farms and John Boyd Thacher State Park.

Contact Katie: 518-427-1564, kpetronis@osiny.org, www.openspaceinstitute.org

Mark King, Executive Director, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy: The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC), a non-profit member-supported organization founded in 1992, protects the natural, scenic, agricultural, and cultural landscapes of the Mohawk and Hudson River valleys. MHLC has protected more than 5,000 acres of land in Albany, Montgomery, and Schenectady counties, and includes 18 public preserves for hiking, cross-country skiing, and other educational and recreational activities. MHLC offers events such as animal tracking, outdoor yoga, birdwatching, and a huge Summer Hike-a-thon that is based at Indian Ladder Farms, one of the properties on the Helderberg Escarpment that MHLC helped to protect in 2003. The protection of the 35 acre Fisher Blvd. land is a shining example of how private landowners, conservation organizations, public entities, and community participation can join together to support and fund meaningful land conservation projects.

Contact Mark: 518-436-6246, mark@mohawkhudson.org, www.mohawkhudson.org

Jeff Leon, Strawberry Fields: Strawberry Fields in Amsterdam contains 118 acres of land protected by a conservation easement with the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy that includes a nature preserve with 2.5 miles of trails, a multigenerational family homestead, and a working farm. With over 300 vascular plant species, including bloodroot, marshmarigold, trillium, trout lily, mayapple, and fringed gentian (its deep purple flowers open only on sunny days, and so difficult to spot), Strawberry Fields is a wonderful place for nature observation, birders, and food-lovers. Lovin' Mama Farm, a certified organic, no-till vegetable and flower farm on the preserve includes one acre of active farmland and a greenhouse full of microgreens. This conservation project serves as an example of how renewable energy, conservation land, public access, and farming can symbiotically co-exist, all while reducing climate impacts with a net-zero carbon footprint. Mitigating global warming has been a primary objective of each piece of this conservation project.

Contact Jeff: jeffleon@mindspring.com, www.mohawkhudson.org/our-preserves/strawberry-fields-nature-preserve, www.lovinmamafarm.com

Lauren Axford, Executive Director, Pine Hollow Arboretum: The Pine Hollow Arboretum (PHA) is a 22-acre, member-supported, not-for-profit arboretum and nature preserve situated in the heart of suburban Slingerlands. The PHA contains a "living museum" of over 3,600 unique tree and plant specimens, 11 ponds, and a natural succession forest, all easily accessed by a network of walking trails and bridges. The PHA grounds are open to the public from dawn to dusk, 365 days per year. PHA also offers an experiential environmental learning program for schools, as well as a high school mentor-docent program. The PHA was a life-long project of Dr. John Abbuhl, who began planting trees here in 1966. John and his wife, Kay, wish that the work of creating and sustaining the PHA will benefit present and future generations in the appreciation and enjoyment of the natural environment.

Contact Lauren: 518-992-2033, pinehollowarb@gmail.com, www.pinehollowarboretum.org

Steve Downs, private landowner: Mr. Downs has always felt that his land along the Vloman Kill should be conserved as "forever wild", as it has ecologic and historic importance. Working in collaboration with Scenic Hudson, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, and the Town of Bethlehem, Steve has agreed to sell 10 acres of his ecologically significant 17 acre parcel to the Town to serve as an expansion of the adjacent Henry Hudson Park. This creek-front land will be protected as parkland for the community to enjoy both from land and water, as kayaking and canoeing past Steve's land is easy from the park's modern kayak launch. This conservation project showcases how non-profit organizations, a municipality, and a private landowner can work together, and pool funding, to ensure that key land can be protected forever through shared interests and resources. The sale of Steve's land to the Town will conserve nationally significant Hudson River estuary habitat for migratory fish and wildlife, as well as protect a historically significant area containing the first Bethlehem settlement including the site of one of the first mills on the Vloman Kill waterfall and land adjacent to a Mohican village. Funding for this project will be provided by both conservation organizations and Bethlehem's Parkland Set Aside Fund. The Parkland Fund is managed with fees paid for by developers to address parkland and recreation demands generated by new developments.

Contact Steve: 518-767-0102, swdowns68@aol.com, www.townofbethlehem.org/269/Henry-Hudson-Park

Mike Knutson, Senior Land Project Manager, Scenic Hudson: 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. It has protected approximately 535 acres of land surrounding the Binnen Kill in southeast Bethlehem, which includes acquisitions of land and conservation easements with local private landowners. These lands and easements help protect habitats which are among the most ecologically vital in the Capital Region, including tidal wetlands



that are home to species such as osprey, peregrine falcons, and migrating waterfowl; as well as spawning and nursery ground for American shad, blueback herring, alewives, and striped bass. **Contact Mike: 845-473-4440 ext. 218, mknutson@scenichudson.org, www.scenichudson.org**

Kris and John Sigsby, private landowners: The Sigsby's conserved their 11 acres of forested land on Bender Lane in Glenmont through the Town of Bethlehem's Conservation Easement Exemption (CEE) program in 2017. By foregoing development on this ecologically valuable parcel in perpetuity, the Sigsby's will receive a 90% reduction in local, county, and school taxes. The community benefits of the Sigsby's conservation land include the forever protection of wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and scenic views in this suburban area. Bethlehem landowners with 5 acres or more are invited to apply to the voluntary CEE program. **Contact Kris and John: 518-436-0573, ksigsby@aol.com. Contact Karen Shaw for Bethlehem's CEE program: kshaw@townofbethlehem.org, www.townofbethlehem.org/682/Conservation-Easement-Review-Board**

Giles Wagoner, private landowner and forester: Giles has been the steward of his 70 acres of birch/beech/maple forestland in Selkirk for over 15 years after he purchased the land from his grandfather. He was the first forester in Albany County to enroll in New York State's Forest Tax Law Program, or 480-a program. This incentive program offers voluntary participants an 80% reduction in the enrolled land's assessed value, resulting in an 80% reduction in property taxes, in exchange for the landowner committing to sustainably manage their forestland for wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and other natural systems services provided by forests. While enrolled in the long-term program, the land cannot be developed, but must be kept forested and follow a state-approved management plan. This private landowner forest management and conservation incentive program provides tax relief to the forester, while providing many environmental benefits to the surrounding community. **Contact Giles: 518-322-3633, gwags727@aol.com**

Adam Zaranko, Executive Director, Albany County Land Bank: The Albany County Land Bank is a non-profit organization established by Albany County in 2014 to facilitate the process of acquiring, improving, and redistributing tax-foreclosed, vacant or abandoned properties. The Land Bank works in partnership with local and state government, non-profits, residents, community groups, responsible developers, and investors to return properties to productive use and support community goals, including revitalizing neighborhoods and, in some cases, the conservation of open space. The Land Bank is currently working with the Town of Bethlehem on a purchase of eight acres of vacant land in Glenmont, which is experiencing high development pressure. Once owned by the Town, this open land will be enjoyed as an oasis of green for generations to come.

Contact Adam: 518-407-0309, azaranko@albanycountylandbank.org, www.albanycountylandbank.org



Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director of the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance;

Robert Davies, Director of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests; and Francis Sheehan, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests:

The Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA) was the first land trust in New York to be awarded a Community Forest grant from the US Forest Service. The Poestenkill Community Forest is a community-managed 436-acre forested parcel located within a 20-minute drive from Albany that provides recreational trails (hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and more) for visitors, serves as a demonstration area for forest stewardship best management practices, and offers educational programs including birding and mushroom walks. The forest was purchased in partnership with a grant from the US Forest Service, a donation from Callanan Industries, and community donations. **Contact Jim: 518-712-9211, jim@rensselaerplateau.org, <https://www.rensselaerplateau.org/communityforest>, Contact Rob: 518-402-9405, robert.davies@dec.ny.gov, www.facebook.com/NYSDEC . Contact Fran: francis.sheehan@dec.ny.gov**

Event Co-sponsors: please contact us with questions and ideas!

Town of Bethlehem: Karen Shaw, Open Space Coordinator, 518-439-4955 x 1106, kshaw@townofbethlehem.org, www.townofbethlehem.org

Town of New Scotland: Adam Greenberg, Town Councilperson, 518-458-2318, agreenberg@townofnewscotland.com, www.townofnewscotland.com

Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy: Mark King, Executive Director, 518-436-6246, mark@mohawkhudson.org, www.mohawkhudson.org

Delmar Farmers Market: Mark Warford, Board President, markwarford28@gmail.com, www.delmarmarket.org

Albany County Natural Resource and Agricultural & Farmland Protection: Laura DeGaetano, 518-447-5670, laura.degaetano@albanycountyny.gov, www.albanycounty.com

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation: Gina Jack, Center Director, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, 518-475-0291, 5Rivers@dec.ny.gov, www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html

Friends of Five Rivers: Joanne Macklin, Executive Director, 518-475-0295, friendsfiverivers@outlook.com, www.friendsoffiverivers.org



Field Notes and Indian Ladder Farms who provided our tastes this evening:

Field Notes: On-farm dinners and brunches at Lansing Farm; food truck. Chefs/Owners Joan Porambo and Kyle MacPherson, 204 Lishakill Rd., Colonie; 802-503-9670, FarmFieldNotes@gmail.com, www.fieldnotes-ny.com

Indian Ladder Farms: Pick-Your-Own, Weddings/Private Events, Educational Programs, Yellow Rock Café, Indian Ladder Farms Cidery and Brewery, 342 Altamont Road, Altamont, info@indianladderfarms.com, 518-765-2956, www.indianladderfarms.com



Save the Date - Part Two!

**“Meet the People Making
Farmland Conservation Happen:
Talks, Tastes, and a Tour!”**

farm-to-table food and craft beverage samples

June 13th, 6-8PM

Guided Farm Tour @ 5:15!

Indian Ladder Farms, Apple Barn