



## Forest Conservation Easement for Land Trusts Program 2022 Project Summaries

### **Agricultural Stewardship Association**

Sugar Mountain Forest

White Creek, Washington County

Award: \$294,640

Since their founding in 1990, the accredited Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) has helped conserve 28,000 acres on 159 properties in Washington and Rensselaer counties in the Upper Hudson River Valley. ASA is one of the very few land trusts in New York State focused exclusively on conserving working farms and forests. The Sugar Mountain Forest project consists of approximately 262 acres of diverse and healthy forest that is bordered on three sides by two New York State Forests and a farm conserved by an ASA conservation easement creating a contiguous block of approximately 3,100 acres of protected land. This unique project features tree species such as sugar maples, American beech, northern red oaks, red maples, black birch, white ash and hemlocks. The property is completely forested and features several intermittent streams within the interior. A perennial stream is located along the eastern boundary of the property and runs south onto New York State Reforestation Land. There are several vernal pools within the property. The property supports a diverse and thriving wildlife habitat and the forest provides a range of ecosystem services, including clean air, filtering local water supplies via tributaries on the property, helping to control flooding and erosion, sustaining and promoting native communities and biodiversity. A large portion of the forest is enrolled in the state's 480a program and the entire property has a forest management plan to ensure protection of conservation values and forest health in the short and long term. The forestland is managed by the landowners, a certified forester and a biologist, for timber, firewood and maple sap production.

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### **Genesee Valley Conservancy**

Saunders Forest Easement

Ossian, Livingston County

Award: \$348,025

The accredited Genesee Valley Conservancy has protected 26,660 acres of land including five nature preserves and nearly 150 conservation easements. The Saunders Forest Easement Project consists of 375 acres of primarily forested lands that have been under the same ownership since 1950. The parcel is immediately adjacent to thousands of acres of State Forest and Wildlife Management Area public lands (Rattlesnake Hill WMA, Canaseraga State Forest, etc.) at the borders of Livingston and Allegheny County, as well as in close proximity to over 200 acres of other land permanently protected by the Genesee Valley Conservancy with private landowners via conservation easement. The forest includes a mix of hardwoods and hemlock-dominated deep ravines and over 1 mile of stream frontage along Sugar Creek whose peak summer temperature has been recorded by the DEC at 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Sugar Creek



is a perennial tributary of the Canaseraga Creek that flows into the Genesee River to the northwest and empties into Lake Ontario. The intact forested lands offer ecosystem services that protect water and air quality, store carbon, provides habitat and corridors for keystone species and megafauna, and supports cultural, recreational and archaeological values with its neighboring public lands. The project will create a valuable buffer between public and private lands that would expand habitat and biodiversity protections, while providing resource use protection from noncompatible or potentially noncompatible adjoining land uses, a conservation strategy identified in the Open Space and Forest Action Plans.

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### **Lake George Land Conservancy**

The Wiawaka Uplands Conservation Easement: Protecting Forest, Water Quality, and History

Lake George, Warren County

Award: \$350,000

The Lake George Land Conservancy (LGLC) is an accredited land trust that has protected more than 12,000 acres and works within the 152,000-acre Lake George Watershed. The LGLC works with willing landowners and partners to preserve the world-renowned water quality of Lake George by protecting and stewarding environmentally significant lands, including streams, wetlands, and forests, from development and conversion. The LGLC will purchase a conservation easement on a ±47-acre forested property on the southeastern side of Lake George that is owned by Wiawaka Center for Women. The property to be encumbered by the conservation easement, called the “Wiawaka Uplands” property, is currently undeveloped forested land with over 1,500 feet of tributary stream and five acres of forested wetland. The Wiawaka Uplands property contains many significant conservation values that are important to the region. Preserving the property with a conservation easement will protect the ecosystem services that the property provides, which include: air quality, water quality, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and climate change resilience. The Wiawaka Uplands property is in a region of the Lake George Watershed with a growing development threat, and these conservation values are threatened by the high-density development that could be allowed on the Wiawaka Uplands property if not protected.

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### **Scenic Hudson Land Trust**

Steepletop

Austerlitz, Columbia County

Award: \$350,000

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. Its team of experts combines land acquisition, support for agriculture, citizen-based advocacy, and sophisticated planning tools to create environmentally healthy



communities, champion smart economic growth, open up riverfronts to the public, and preserve the valley's inspiring beauty and natural resources. To date, using a combination of conservation easements and fee acquisitions, the accredited Scenic Hudson Land Trust has preserved more than 53,000 acres of at-risk land across the region, including more than 20,000 acres on over 135 family farms in its 10-county mission area. Steepletop, consisting of just under 200 acres of mixed northern hardwood forest, wetlands, and open meadows, represents the largest single inholding in Harvey Mountain State Forest. This property is an important conservation priority due to its educational, historic, and ecological value, as well as potential for restored public access. It is the historic home of one of America's most treasured poets, Edna St. Vincent Millay, who elegized this landscape in her works, and the immediate region has also been identified in numerous planning documents, including the Hudson Valley Conservation Strategy and other land-trust created initiatives, for its habitat connectivity and other public benefits. Numerous important native species have been documented on the site by consulting biologists and Steepletop staff, including rare butterflies, many bird species, transient moose, bobcats, and fishers. The presence of mammal species, such as fishers, that require large intact blocks of habitat underscores the ecological value of this property from a landscape connectivity perspective.