

e-Appendix A

REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES’ UNABRIDGED 2015–16 REPORTS

LONG ISLAND – REGION 1 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee

Counties

Nassau, Suffolk

Meeting Dates: The Region 1 Regional Advisory Committee met on Friday, March 15, 2013 at Childs Mansion, Flax Pond State Tidal Wetland and Marine Laboratory, Setauket, NY, and again on April 19, 2013 at Administration Headquarters, Long Island State Parks Region, Belmont Lake State Park, Belmont, NY.

Report and Recommendations of the Region 1 Regional Advisory Committee Regarding Open Space Conservation in the State of New York

Introduction

In 2010, the Trust for Public Land (“TPL”) issued a report entitled, “The Economic Benefits and Fiscal Impact of Parks and Open Space in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York.” The following year the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council (“EDC”) released its “Strategic Economic Development Plan for the Long Island Region.” The Region 1 Regional Advisory Committee draws from these two significant and highly relevant reports, and from the extensive knowledge and experience of its members, to address the goals of Commissioners Martens and Harvey for this iteration of the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, as they pertain to Long Island.

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.
- 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.

2013 PRIORITY ACQUISITION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has retained the seven major project categories identified in the previous Open Space Plan: **Long Island Sound, South Shore Estuary Reserve, Peconic Pinelands Maritime Reserve, Central Pine Barrens, Special Groundwater Protection Areas, Atlantic Coast and Trails & Greenways.**

Each of the seven projects categories is described below, followed by descriptions of representative projects in each category.

The project narrative includes new terms this year that speak to the significant social, economic and environmental changes experienced on Long Island since the last iteration of the Open Space Plan. These include: coastal resiliency, mitigation of sea level rise, marsh migration, 100 year floodplain, agri-tourism and Potential Environmental Justice Areas (PEJA's), among others. Also for the first time, reference is made to State acquisition of agricultural easements on farmland, per the policy recommendations of the Region 1 Committee.

Priority Projects

Long Island Sound: 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.
- Shu Swamp Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Land adjacent to Shu Swamp, a Class I freshwater wetland within the Oyster Bay 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 Latingtown 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. 8-acre waterfront property on Hempstead Harbor including woods, sandy open space, and almost 4 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 LI 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 one mile of Sound frontage and 2000 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 Soundfront: Southold: Suffolk. 95 acres of woods and meadow in Mattituck with over 2100 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.

South Shore Estuary Reserve: 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 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. 146 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.
- 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 8-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.

Trails & Greenways: 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.
- 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 Carmen's 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.

Peconic Pinelands Maritime Reserve: 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 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 Pipe's 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, comprised primarily old fields with stands of red cedar coastal forest. The property's sandy beaches are backed by coastal bluffs rising to 65 feet in elevation.
- Stony Hill Woods: East Hampton: Suffolk. Nearly 550 acres in northern Amagansett on the glacial moraine, containing old growth forest and kettlehole 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.

Central Pine Barrens: 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 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, Critical Resource Area and Compatible Growth Area parcels to maintain the hydrological and ecological integrity of the area.

Special Ground Water Protection Areas – 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 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 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 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. 162 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.

Atlantic Coast: 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 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.

Committee Members

The 2013 Regional Advisory Committee consisted of 21 members from town and county government, local and regional land trusts, civic associations, advocacy groups and foundations. Ten were returning members of the Committee (*), eleven new to the Committee.

Nassau County Appointees

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

Suffolk County Appointees

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

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
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NEW YORK CITY – REGION 2 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee

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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 88th 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 145th 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 88th 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 5th 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 railway 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:

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

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.

2013 PRIORITY PROJECTS NARRATIVE

WATERFRONT ACCESS

BRONX

MOTT HAVEN–PORT MORRIS WATERFRONT – The Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront Plan is consistent with three rezonings on adjacent land as well as 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 – Creation of a greenway/trailway along the Bronx River from 172d Street to Hunts Point Riverside Park and Soundview Park. This corridor utilizing 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 for an outstanding site for a community boat launch.

Putnam Railroad – A greenway through the northern Bronx using an abandoned railroad 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. The acquisition of this land will provide the only public park stop along the Greenway in the Bronx.

BRONX / NEW YORK

HARLEM RIVER WATERFRONT – 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 the 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 – 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 preservation opportunities; the CSX-owned and city-owned parcels north of Fordham Road offering 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. The 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 – Four privately owned industrial lots along the Harlem River in the Inwood section of Manhattan that would form a waterside promenade with fishing access.

QUEENS

JAMAICA BAY PROTECTION AREA – A premier coastal habitat including important marine and terrestrial ecosystems and 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 116th 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," published by the Trust for Public Land and New York City Audubon Society in 1992; 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," published by the Trust for Public Land and New York City Audubon Society in 1992; 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," published by the Trust for Public Land and New York City Audubon Society in 1992; 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.
- **Udall's Ravine** – A ravine and stream corridor that are part of a larger wetland ecosystem.

KINGS / QUEENS

BROOKLYN / QUEENS EAST RIVER WATERFRONT – 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**
- **Halletts 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 – Approximately 4 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 – 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 regarding the Goethal's Bridge).
- **Merrill's Creek** – A tidal wetland system north of Saw Mill Creek on the Arthur Kill.
- **Saw Mill Creek** – Tidal and fresh water marsh complex adjacent to Prall's Creek; includes critical habitat for State-threatened species.
- **Gulfport Marsh & 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. The site 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 by tankfields in the past, 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.
- **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 of Arthur Kill Road, this 12+/- acre property consists of shipwrecks, mud flats, salt marsh and upland woods including an historic cemetery. It provides significant habitat for many species of birds.
- **Sharrotts Road Shorelands** – A 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 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. The property 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 50+/- acres of forest with rare Blackjack Oak, Persimmon & River Birch, ponds and shoreline surrounding Exxon

Mobil's tank farm along the Arthur Kill. The property provides significant habitat for amphibians and reptiles.

NORTH SHORE WATERFRONT GREENWAY – This greenway utilizing 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 and to the area of the Goethals Bridge. This would provide for waterfront access and an added recreation element along the north shore of Staten Island.

NEW YORK CITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION SITES

- **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 73rd 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 acres on Little Neck Parkway.

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

- **Con Edison 15th 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 6-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** – 9.5 acres including some freshwater wetlands, located in the Port Richmond section of Staten Island.

LONG POND – Long Pond – A 90-acre natural wetland area on Staten Island; features knob and kettle topography and a diversity of habitats. **MIV Triangle** – This 5-acre parcel (block 6765, lot 1) located in Richmond County on Raritan Bay, would enhance public access to Raritan Bay shoreline.

STATEN ISLAND BLUEBELT – 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 wetland 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 – 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.
- **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 – 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 – Goodhue a.k.a. The Children’s Aid Society – Located in northeast Richmond County. This 42+/- acre site consists of woods, freshwater wetlands and forms

a link with Allison Pond, Jones Woods, to Snug Harbor. Twenty-three acres remain under threat of development.

2009 NEW YORK CITY PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

ADDITIONAL PROPERTIES OF IMPORTANCE

BRONX COUNTY

- Bruckner Boulevard & Bronx River Ave
- Lafayette Avenue fur factory
- 1219 Gilbert Place*
- 1264 Lafayette Avenue*
- 740 Manida Street*
- Corporal Irwin Fisher– Playground
- Sedgwick Avenue
- Kingsbridge Crescent
- High Island
- Hudson River Greenway
- Melrose Commons
- South Bronx Greenway
- Westchester Creek
- Pugsley's Creek
- Riverdale Park Addition
- Highbridge Park
- Nelson Avenue Playground
- Hunt's Point Waterfront Access
- Co-op City Easement
- Port Morris/Randall's Island Greenway
- Community Garden/Webster Ave (210 St.)
- South Bronx Lowline
- Hutchinson River waterfront access
- City Island Gateway Project (Block 5636 Lot 149)

KINGS COUNTY

- Gowanus Creek Public Place
- Grand Street Park Extension
- 1480 Myrtle Avenue
- Bush Terminal Piers (privately-owned parcels)
- Loew's King Flagship Theatre
- Cross Brooklyn Railroad

- A. Chairantano Park Addition

NEW YORK COUNTY

- 225, 227, 231 West 122 Street
- Upper Hudson River Waterfront Harlem Piers (inland lots)
- Esplanade Gardens
- Con Edison site, 201–203 Street, Harlem River
- Bannock, Burn Realty site
- Paragon Cable site

QUEENS COUNTY

- Hunter's Point South (Queens West)
- Alley Pond Park Addition (Douglaston Pond)
- Flushing Bay Marine Promenade (Willet's Point)
- Downtown Flushing Waterfront (Willet's Point)
- Call–A–Head Properties
- Rockaway Shoreway across from LILCO property, Between Beach 113th and 116th
- RKO Keith's Theatre
- Steinway Mansion
- Brooklyn/Queens Greenway:
- Cypress Hills Cemetery Easement
- Steinway/Ravenswood Cemetery Easements
- Creedmoor Hospital Easement
- Forest Park Gateway Greenway

RICHMOND COUNTY

- North Shore Greenbelt:
- West Brighton Historic Houses
- North Shore Greenway Addition/Block 185,187

- Harbor Herons Wildlife Complex additions:
- Staten Island Industrial Urban Renewal Area
- Teleport Swamp Woods
- Little Fresh Kills
- Cable Avenue Woods
- Sandy Ground Historic Site
- Serpentine Art and Nature Commons
- Arbutus Woods Watershed
- South Beach Northern Wetlands
- Richmond Creek Easements
- Wolfe's Pond Park Addition
- Clove Lakes Park Addition
- West Shore Expressway Interchange
- Gabler's Creek (North & South)
- Poillon–Seguine–Britton House
- Conference House Park Addition:
 - Killie's Creek
 - Twin Streams
 - Tussock Sedge Pond

**SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT PROPERTIES WITH POTENTIAL
FOR INTER-AGENCY TRANSFER FOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE/RECREATIONAL USE**

BRONX COUNTY

- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (A – Bronx Kill Waterfront)
- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (B – Park Ave Waterfront at Harlem River)
- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (C – Lincoln Avenue at Harlem River)
- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (D – Alexander Avenue at Harlem River)
- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (E – East 132nd Street Pier at East River)
- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (F – Historic Port Morris Gantries)
- Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront (G – Waterfront Connecting Path)
- Property on Exterior Street
- Bronx River Trailway
- LORAL site City lots
- Edgewater Road
- Croton Aqueduct Trail Linkage
- Highbridge Peace Park
- Brush Ave. (East Side)

KINGS COUNTY

- Brooklyn & Queens East River Waterfront from Brooklyn Army Terminal to Astoria Power Station (government-owned parcels)

- Halleck Street between Court & Clinton Streets
- Current police impound lot at Erie Basin Pier
- Upland area for Brooklyn Waterfront
- Greenway along Piers 7 – 10
- Wolcott Street end
- "Diverter" property at Degraw and Columbia Streets
- Division Street end
- DEP Sludge Tank Relocation/Lumber Yard.
- Dupont Street, Greenpoint
- MTA lot at Commercial Street.
- Former Ports & Terminal Pier and Upland at 44th Drive, Queens
- Vernon Boulevard at 31st Ave, Astoria, Queens
- Brooklyn Navy Yard – Officers' Row
- 562 Gates Avenue
- Marion Street
- Saratoga Square Urban Renewal Area

NEW YORK COUNTY

- Croton Aqueduct Gatehouse at 113th Street
- Croton Aqueduct Gatehouse at 135th Street
- Harlem Beach
- Lot formerly containing Hamilton Grange
- Community Gardens

- W. 119th St. between Adam Clayton
- Powell Blvd.& St. Nicholas Ave.
- St. Nicholas Ave. & Frederick Douglas
- Blvd. between 119th and W. 120th Sts.
- W. 127th& W. 128th Sts. – St. Nicholas
- Ave. & Frederick Douglass Blvd.

QUEENS COUNTY

- Bergen Basin
- Fort Totten
- Port Authority Ballfield
- Creedmoor Historic Buildings
- Notts Landing
- South Jamaica Neighborhood Park
- Langston Hughes Library Open Space
- Thurston Basin
- Flushing Airport Wetlands
- Nassau Expressway Right of Way
(See also Brooklyn & Queens East River
Waterfront, listed under Kings County)

RICHMOND COUNTY

- Arlington Marsh
- Willowbrook State School Woodlands
- North Shore Railroad
- Old Farm Colony
- Richmond Parkway Right of Way
- Willowbrook Parkway Right of Way
- Northern Sea View
- Fresh Kills Landfill

LOWER HUDSON VALLEY – REGION 3 Open Space Advisory Committee

TABLE 1 – Priority Projects as listed in the 2006 Plan, with a summary of committee recommendations:

Summary of Priority Projects solely within Region 3.

No.	Project & Recommendation
24	Great Rondout Wetlands - no change
25	Great Swamp - minor revision
26	Karst Aquifer Region – revised
27	Long Island Sound Coastal Corridor - no change
28	Neversink Highlands – Revise, Rename Lower Neversink River Valley
29	New York Highlands - Revise
30	Northeastern Westchester Watershed and Biodiversity Lands - no change
31	Plutarch/Black Creek Wetlands Complex - Revise
32	Rockland Riverfront Communities / Palisades Ridge - Revise
33	Schunnemunk Mountain / Moodna Creek /Woodcock Mountain -
34	Shawangunk Mountain Region – Revise
36	Wallkill Valley - no change

Summary of New Priority Projects proposed in Region 3:

New 35	Bashakill Wetland System
New	Hudson Valley/New York City Foodshed

Summary of Priority Projects in Region 3/4:

37	Catskill River and Road Corridors - Revise
38	Catskills Unfragmented Forest - Revise
39	Hudson River Estuary/Greenway Trail /Quadracentennial Legacy Trail - Revise name, description
40	New York City Watershed Lands - Revise
41	Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley - Revise
42	Turtle Conservation Sites – Revise
43	Upper Delaware Highlands – Revise, Rename Delaware River Highlands

Summary of Multi-Region Priority Projects:

133	Statewide Farmland Protection – no change
134	Long Distance Trail Corridors – Revise

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.

*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

Priority Projects – Region 3

GREAT RONDOUT WETLANDS {24} – 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 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 wide diversity of aquatic habitats and has great potential as a Wildlife Management Area, including waterfowl hunting and furbearer trapping opportunities.

GREAT SWAMP {25} – One of the three largest wetlands in New York, the Great Swamp (6000 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 the Swamp 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, located only 60 miles north of Manhattan, development pressures are intense, demanding that this vital and fragile resource be safeguarded now from further development and associated runoff. In order 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 need to 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.

KARST AQUIFER REGION {26}– The Karst Aquifers are situated in a narrow band of carbonate rocks that extend through Ulster County, generally trending south-southwest through portions of towns of Saugerties, Kingston, 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, provides diverse outdoor recreational opportunities and critical water reserves. In many locations the outcroppings and ridges are very visible from roads and community centers and could have important scenic values to local communities and visitors. Several scenic byways, heritage trails, and bike trails have been designated within and within sight of this region and would benefit from the permanent protection of their viewsheds.

LONG ISLAND SOUND COASTAL CORRIDOR {27} – 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 fourteen acres 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 120acre 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 {28} – This area encompasses the Neversink River from when it leaves the Neversink Reservoir, and runs South through Sullivan and Orange County 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. This area 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 in this area, 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 headwater stream area to the east, open areas to the south, potentially extending north to Holiday Mountain Ski Area along Rt.17/Future I-86. While acquiring new public access, work to maintain existing ones and ensure adequate access exists and improve as necessary.

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 purposes 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 {29} – – 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 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 these tourists in turn 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 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 comprised of State Parks, DEC Forests 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—NYS DEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program), Critical Environmental Areas, and Audubon designated Bird Conservation Areas. Some of these designated areas in the Highlands include the following estuarine and terrestrial BIA’s: 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 as 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 2 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 has been preserved through public/private partnerships. Additional targets for protections include in holdings and buffers . Continuation of successful preservation efforts in Sterling Forest is critical to maintain the rich biodiversity and diverse habitats that this ecosystem and vital watershed provides. The preservation of property on the northern Park 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 the 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.

• ***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–acres 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 could otherwise 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 close 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 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 values, 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 US 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 the 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 ecological integrity of the Highlands Region 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 the completion of the Highlands Trail, creating a connected network of long distance and local 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 {30} –

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 is 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 the 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 {31} – 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 the lack of development. The area also could provide significant recreational opportunities including canoeing, hiking, wildlife observation, 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 a “John Burroughs Black Creek Corridor,” a continuous water/land corridor along the Black Creek that incorporates such public open 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 {32} – 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, 2) the Upper Hackensack River watershed and four subwatersheds: 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 NYS DEC 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 (Class A wetland 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 {33} ~ – 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 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. This

Park is a substantial but isolated tract of protected land – a large portion of the 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 multiyear 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 16000 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, the 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 Legacy Ridge property, was purchased by the Open Space Institute in March 2013, many of the future land acquisition projects aim to protect relatively small parcels ranging from 10 to 50 acres.

SHAWANGUNK MOUNTAINS REGION {34} – *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 our region’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 (a 5,000 + acre National Natural Landmark managed by The Nature Conservancy and owned by 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 NYS in 2006 as a NYS Scenic Byway, giving 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. 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 Areas 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 twelve 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 at a landscape scale.

Landscape Connectivity – The Shawangunk Mountains are in close proximity to other significant biodiversity areas that are 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. A 8,000 acre goal for protection of agricultural lands in the Rondout and Wallkill Valleys has recently been established. Prime examples of these linkages include 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, protect floodplains that serve to mitigate the impacts of flooding, and would support an extensive trail system, linking the D and 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 Verkeederkill/Shawangunkill/Shawangunk Grasslands connection in Shawangunk, 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, 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 Verkerderkill 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) 86 highway and development pressure along the ridge and in the vicinity.

BASHAKILL WETLAND SYSTEM {NEW 35} – The Bashakill Wildlife Management Area consists of over 3,000 acres in the south eastern 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 the 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 and 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, 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, threatened 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 incidence 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

Wildlife Management area 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 the run-off from the Shawangunk Ridge and tributaries, including the Pine Kill, have a significant impact on this important eco-system. This important wetland system serves as an important stormwater retention area that helps to 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 link 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.

WALLKILL VALLEY {36} – 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 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. This area also provides significant recreational opportunities including hiking, bird watching and hunting. Opportunities to conserve additional lands in this area should be pursued.

HUDSON VALLEY/NEW YORK CITY FOODSHED {New} – 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 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, allow 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 a buffer area below steep slopes in valley bottoms, in turn often reducing runoff and slowing down overland flow during larger storms, both of which ameliorate flood 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: http://www.orangecountygov.com/filestorage/124/1362/1462/4586/4592/Chapter_IIIC_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 rich agricultural soils that 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 in the County's Centers and Greenspace Guide (<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/Planning/ggcaq.pdf>), and its Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. These are the Panhandle Prime Soils Area in the Town of North East; Dutchess Dairy Heartland in the Towns of North East and Amenia; Smithfield Valley in the Towns of Stanford, Washington, and Amenia; the Oblong Valley Prime Soils Area in the Towns of Amenia and Dover; the Pine Plains Prime Soils Area in the Town of Pine Plains; the Salt Point Prime Soils Area in the Towns of Stanford, Clinton, and Pleasant Valley; the Red Hook Breadbasket Area in the Town of Red Hook; the Sprout Creek area in the Towns of Washington, Union Vale, and LaGrange; the Clove Valley in the Towns of Union Vale and Beekman, and the Great Swamp area in the Town of Pawling.
 - 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 and 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 the farmed land and drinking water quality protection. Much of the growth in production agriculture within Westchester is generated from smaller scale Community Supported Agriculture 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 1750’s 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.
- The 47–acre Davies Farm located in the Town of Clarkstown, hamlet of Congers, Rockland County -- the last of 4 active farms in the county to be preserved. Located on the western flank of the Palisades Ridge adjacent to Rockland Lake State Park. The farm is owned by Niles Meriwether Davies, an 11th–generation descendent of Meriwether Lewis of the Lewis and Clarke Expedition. The farm on the eastern side of Lake Deforest produces corn, squash and 20 varieties of apples. Every summer thousands of New York City residents come to pick your own apples sales. Efforts should be made to ensure the protection of this farm from development.

Priority Projects, Regions 3 & 4

CATSKILL RIVER AND ROAD CORRIDORS {37} – 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 visitors with a startling first impression of the Catskill/Delaware region as an 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 to the 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, and 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 coldwater 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. This area also contains a unique geographical feature, Mount Point, one of the only free standing mountains in the world lies at the convergence 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 species living in this area, both plant and animal species.

The Delaware River Basin supplies over 15 million people (approximately 5% of the nation's population) with water for drinking, 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 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/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 LWRP which has identified many opportunities to improve river accesses for the public as well as amenities for the travelling public, be it on the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, or from 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 accesses where

needed such as in Pond Eddy, and improving the way finding signage to facilitate navigation to the resources and to conveying 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 the Roebling Aqueduct and D&H Canal would all benefit from protections and increased funding for creating trails and programming. Linkages to other priority areas include the Basha Kill Wetland and 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, these lands are ripe for a partnership between the residents, municipalities and the State, to help maximize the benefits of these lands to the area residents and visitors, and downriver communities, helping both the State and the area communities realize the value of the lands.

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 through 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, Delaware River, in Sullivan and Orange County is a critical nesting and wintering area for bald eagles, and also provides numerous public hunting and fishing opportunities. 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 towards preserving habitat, water

quality and 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 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 already 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 an 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 the 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, as well as 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 on 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.

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.

CATSKILLS UNFRAGMENTED FOREST {38} – 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. 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 to create 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 of 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 the many parts of the Town 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. The Woodstock Land Conservancy's (WLC) protection of Mt. Guardian began in 2000 with the outright gift of two ridgeline parcels totaling 18 acres. WLC expanded the area of protected forestland on 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 3500' 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 3300-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. 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 between 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 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 the 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.

HUDSON RIVER CORRIDOR ESTUARY / HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY AND GREENWAY TRAIL / HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL ART TRAIL {39}– 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 in New Baltimore in Greene County, all of which increase public access to the Hudson River, tributaries and ridgelines. Efforts to conserve the historic views from the Olana State Historic Site have been redoubled via partnerships between 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 & 4 to create new links in the Greenway Trail, as described in the Greenway Act of 1991, Quadracentennial Legacy Trail (existing and new trails as designated as part of the 2009 Quadracentennial 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, 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 are not be limited to: : lands along Black Creek in the Town of Lloyd, Ossining shoreline trail, Bronck Island, 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, 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.
- ***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, Cocksackie 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.
- ***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, Papscaanee 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.

NEW YORK CITY WATERSHED LANDS {40} – New York City expects to continue acquisition efforts under the 1997 Watershed Agreement (signed by local communities, counties, and the State) and the 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 {41} – 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 and its viewsheds. 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, 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.

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, 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 a high biodiversity and serving as an important aquifer recharge area; surrounding active farmland, 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; 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, since 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, productive farmland, and habitat supporting endangered and threatened species, continue to be important considerations within the overall area.

TURTLE CONSERVATION SITES {42} – 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 5 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 {43} – 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 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 close proximity to major Metropolitan areas such as New York City, Trenton and Philadelphia, this ecoregion 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 as 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 National Park System, 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 only own 125 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 Blueway. This area has been engaging in a Local Waterfront 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, 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, the Roebling Aqueduct and D&H 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 the Delaware River Highlands, Catskill River & 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 reflect the needs of area residents and visitors. Additionally, these lands are ripe for a partnership between the residents, municipalities and the State, to help maximize the benefits of these lands to the area residents and visitors, and downriver communities, helping both the State and the area communities realize the value of the lands.

STATEWIDE FARMLAND PROTECTION {133} No changes suggested.

LONG DISTANCE TRAIL CORRIDORS {134} – Land and water trail corridors provide important connections between 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 other motorized and non-motorized users. 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 utilized 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 the interim upgrades of the corridor for the creation of multi-use trails. These are generally one time opportunities that need to 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 in 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 throughout 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,” part of that approval was the towns committing to the protection of the Appalachian Trail from adverse development as a special asset to these towns.

Long Path Trail: The Long Path is a hiking corridor with the vision of linking New York City with the Adirondacks high peaks. Currently the Long Path has been established from the George Washington Bridge extending 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 Thatcher State Park in Albany County, some 330 miles. 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 re-routed off public roads, thereby enhancing public enjoyment and safety. The significant progress that has been 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 that continued recreation 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 including Minnewaska and the Catskill Park, and the Finger Lakes Trail. The Long Path was previously the subject of proposed federal legislation which will fund a feasibility study to determine if it is eligible for designation as a National Scenic Trail. This effort should be restarted.

Highlands Trail: The Highlands Trail (HT) stretches for more than 200 miles from Philipsburg, NJ on the Delaware River northeast into Sterling Forest on the NY border, and then north through Goosepond Mountain State Park, Schunnemunk Mountain, Black Rock Forest and Storm King Mountain to the Hudson River. Work is currently under way to extend the trail across the river through Hudson Highlands and Clarence Fahnestock State Parks to the Connecticut border, with the first new section being in Wonder Lake State Park. The HT is in the process of extending west through PA and eastward through CT, 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 between a number of other long distance trails, including the North Country National Scenic Trail and the Long Path and through the 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, inline skating, cross-country skiing, equestrian and wheelchair use, rail-trails are extremely popular as recreation and transportation corridors. Rail-trails 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 have the opportunity to create recreational linkages between communities and resources. Projects such as the Ulster County's proposed Catskill Mountain Rail Trail and Unified Rail Trail Network will connect the 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 the 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.

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 Routes, since the late 1800's. Modern water trails are a more recently recognized trail type, first gaining national prominence in the early 1990's. 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 1,200 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 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, a number of Finger Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Lake George, and along coastal Long Island.

TABLE 2 - Summary of Proposed Priority Projects for 2013

Region	No.	Project	County(s)	Resource Area	Existing Protection	Open Space Conservation Objective
3	24	Great Rondout Wetlands	Ulster	Hudson River Valley	DEC	Watershed, Habitat Protection
3	25	Great Swamp	Dutchess & Putnam	Taconic Ridge & NY Highlands	ECL, Some NFP, DEC, Land Trusts	Watershed, Habitat Protection
3	26	Karst Aquifer Region	Ulster, Orange	Shawangunk Mtns	Land Trusts, SWCDs	Watershed Protection, Habitat, Recreation
3	27	Long Island Sound Coastal Corridor	Westchester	LI Sound Shoreline	Some County	Habitat, Recreation
3	28	Lower Neversink River Valley	Sullivan, Orange	Catskill - Delaware Region	DEC	Habitat Protection, Recreation
3	29	New York Highlands	Rockland, Orange, Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess	New York Highlands	OPRHP, PIPC NYCDEP, DEC	Watershed, Habitat Protection, Recreation

e-Appendix A – REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES’ 2013 REPORTS

Region	No.	Project	County(s)	Resource Area	Existing Protection	Open Space Conservation Objective
3	30	Northeastern Westchester Watershed and Biodiversity Lands	Westchester		Some County	Watershed Protection, Habitat
3	31	Plutarch/Black Creek Wetland Complex	Ulster	Hudson River Valley	DEC, Land Trusts, SWCD	Watershed, Habitat Protection
3	32	Rockland Riverfront Communities / Palisades Ridge	Rockland	Hudson River Valley & Estuary	PIPC, County.	Recreation; Watershed, Habitat Protection
3	33	Schunнемunk Mt./Modena Creek & Woodcock Mt.	Orange	NY Highlands & Sterling Forest	PIPC, NFP partial ownership	Recreation; Watershed, Habitat Protection
3	34	Shawangunk Mtn Region	Ulster, Sullivan & Orange	Shawangunk Ridge	PIPC, DEC, NFP	Biodiversity/Habitat Recreation
3	New	Bashakill Wetland System	Sullivan		DEC	Biodiversity/Habitat Recreation
3	36	Wallkill Valley	Ulster & Orange		USF&WS, DEC, County, Land Trusts, SWCDs, Local, Ag & Markets	Watershed, Habitat Protection, Recreation, Agriculture
3	New	Hudson Valley/New York City Foodshed	Multiple	Hudson – Delaware River Valleys	Ag & Markets, Land Trusts, SWCDs, Counties and Municipalities	Agriculture
3/4	37	Catskill River and Road Corridors	Delaware, Sullivan, Ulster, Greene	Catskill - Delaware	DEC, NYCDEP	Habitat Protection, Watershed, Recreation, Scenic
3/4	38	Catskill Unfragmented Forest	Sullivan, Ulster, Greene	Catskill - Delaware	DEC, NYCDEP	Habitat Protection, Recreation, Watershed

Region	No.	Project	County(s)	Resource Area	Existing Protection	Open Space Conservation Objective
3/4	39	Hudson River Corridor Estuary / Hudson River Estuary and Greenway Trail / Hudson River School Art Trail	Multiple	Hudson River Valley & Estuary	DEC, OPRHP, Counties and Municipalities	Scenic, Recreation, Habitat
3/4	40	NYC Watershed Lands	Multiple	Catskill - Delaware Region; NY Highlands & Croton Watershed	NYCDEP, DEC	Watershed Protection
3/4	41	Taconic Ridge/ Harlem Valley	Putnam Dutchess Columbia Rensselaer	Taconic Ridge	DEC, OPRHP	Habitat Protection Recreation
3/4	42	Turtle Conservation Sites	Ulster & Dutchess	Hudson River Valley & Estuary	Some NFP	Habitat
3/4	43	Delaware River Highlands	Delaware, Orange, Sullivan	Delaware	DEC, Ag & Markets, Land Trusts, SWCDs, Counties and Municipalities	Habitat, Recreation, Agriculture
State Wide	133	Farmland Protection	Multiple		Ag & Markets, Land Trusts, SWCDs, Counties and Municipalities	Agriculture
State Wide	135	Long Distance Trail Corridors	Multiple	Catskill - Delaware; Hudson River Valley; Shawangunk	DEC, PIPC, OPRHP, NPS	Recreation

2008 OPEN SPACE PLAN REVISION 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 ecosystems 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.

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

The Region 3 Open Space Advisory Committee met on February 26, March 21, April 22, May 21 and July 2, 2013 to complete this report. We wish to express our appreciation for this opportunity and look forward to our continued participation in the revision and subsequent implementation of the next edition of NY's Open Space Conservation Plan.

CAPITAL DISTRICT – REGION 4

Open Space Advisory Committee Report

2015 REVISION

COUNTIES

Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Schoharie counties.

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.

2013 REGION 4 OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES

- **Albany Pine Bush**

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 2010 management 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, the Commission currently estimates that an additional 2,180 acres will have to be secured to create a viable preserve of 5,380 acres. The Region 4 Advisory Committee supports the work of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve 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 by the Commission.

- **Catskill Mountain/Delaware River Region**

The region encompassing the Catskill Mountains and East and West Branches of the Delaware River are 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, New York City Watershed protection lands, and private property, comprises a large, central part of this region. Priorities for acquisition within the greater Catskill Mountain/Delaware River Region should focus on securing sensitive, unprotected high elevation areas and alpine communities; protecting expanses of unfragmented forests; connecting protected areas, particularly in the valleys between high elevations; protecting reverence habitat and riparian buffer land; preserving areas demonstrating high biological diversity; preserving significant cultural and scenic resources; and improving access and recreational opportunities on public land. Special consideration should also be given to protecting and providing access to the Region's water resources, including specific attention to protecting the watershed supplying New York City's public drinking water, which is identified as a separate priority project area in the Region 3/4 section of the Plan.

Specific protection priorities within the Region include the following:

- 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.
- 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.
 - 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.
 - Delaware River and Tailwaters/Upper Delaware Highlands – represents a significant recreational resource, supports significant biological diversity including critical bald eagle wintering and nesting habitat, and provides picturesque scenic vistas; additional protection and improved access are the primary objectives.

- **Coxsackie Flats Grassland Area**

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’ continues to be vulnerable and increased protection is necessary to secure this significant grassland habitat and very popular recreational birding area.

- **Drowned Lands Swamp Watershed**

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 remain a high priority in order to safeguard the ecological diversity of the wetlands, as well as the agricultural viability and pastoral views of the surrounding countryside.

- **Five Rivers Environmental Education Center**

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**

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

- **Helderbergs**

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 a 250-acre park that is 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 and Thompson Lake State Parks, which provide 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.

- **Hoosic River Corridor**

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 the 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 commenced by the Town of Hoosick and Village of Hoosick Falls. Furthermore, the Hoosic River is already a DEC-designated Public Fishing River, and as such, DEC should continue efforts to obtain public fishing rights.

- **Hudson River Valley Corridor/Hudson River Estuary**

Several projects have been identified within this regionally significant area that will enhance protection of, and improve access to, the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Hudson River, its tributaries, and the surrounding Hudson River Valley. This may include protection of new public lands or expansion of existing parkland and public open space. These initiatives will also contribute to meeting the goals and objectives established in the Greenway Act of 1991 and the Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda, including creation of linkages between municipalities along the River.

Specific priorities within this protection area include the following:

- Hudson River Greenway Trail and linkages between other trail systems;
- Significant scenic vistas, including the Olana viewshed;
- Hudson River School Art Trail;

- Hudson River tributaries;
- River and tributary access parcels;
- Proposed and potential Hudson River Greenway Water Trail and Blueway sites;
- Significant biodiversity sites;
- Important farmland;
- Islands and former islands of ecological importance, including candidate areas for shoreline wetland restoration;
- Lands important to regional sea level rise adaptation; and
- Inter-agency State land transfer parcels (from OGS to DEC and/or OPRHP).

- **Long Path**

The Long Path is a 300+ mile corridor extending from New York City through Schenectady County. State acquisitions would protect the trail corridor and allow sections of the trail to be rerouted off public roads thereby enhancing public enjoyment and safety. The significant progress that has been made in northern Greene County should be continued, and further work is necessary in Albany, Schenectady, and Schoharie counties.

- **Mohawk River Valley Corridor/Barge Canal**

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**

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.

- **Region 4 Rail Trail Projects**

The greatest risk following the abandonment of a rail line is the possibility that the right-of-way will be subdivided and sold off piece-meal, 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, inline 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 life styles, 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); and
- Schoharie Gateway Rail Trail in Schoharie County.

- **Rensselaer Plateau**

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, including 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 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**

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, the 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**

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 the 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 (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.

- **Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley**

The Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley is an important scenic, recreational, agricultural, and natural resource area of eastern Rensselaer and Columbia counties. While substantial progress has been made with land protection in this area, key portions demonstrating high biodiversity, scenic views, working forests and farmland, and potential connections to other protected lands remain unprotected. Specifically, extensions of the Taconic Crest Trail and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail should be pursued and further land conservation efforts in the Route 22 corridor remain important. This corridor is characterized by prominent ridgelines and includes scenic vistas, highly productive farmland, and wetland habitat supporting endangered and threatened species. Also within this corridor is Shaker Swamp, an almost 500-acre wetland complex supporting a high biodiversity and serving as an important aquifer recharge area. In addition, the Shaker Swamp and surrounding active farmland were formerly owned by the Shakers and continue to be regarded as historically significant.

- **Wolf Hollow/Hoffman's Fault**

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 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 a number of locally rare to uncommon ferns and mosses and one 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**

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 of the protection area designated by the Albany Pine Bush Commission, its attributes have been recognized by the Commission 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.

2013 REGION 4 OPEN SPACE 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.

REGION 4 OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Commissioner 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

County Appointees:

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

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

COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

February 12, 2013

March 5, 2013

April 15, 2013

April 25, 2013

EASTERN ADIRONDACKS AND LAKE CHAMPLAIN – REGION 5 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee

COUNTIES

CLINTON, ESSEX, FRANKLIN, FULTON, HAMILTON, SARATOGA, WARREN, WASHINGTON

I. 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 clearcutting.

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.

IV. MEMBERS AND AFFILIATION

- 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 BanksWashington County
- Diane Fish (Rocci Acuirre*).....Adirondack Council
- David Gibson (Dan Plumley*).....Adirondack Wild
- Ross Whaley.....Adirondack Landowners Association
- Roger DziengeleskiIndependent Appointee
- Duane RicketsonIndependent Appointee
- Neil Woodworth (Allison Beals*)Adirondack Mountain Club
- Teri Ptacek (Renee Boulon*).....Agricultural Stewardship Association
- Zoe Smith.....Wildlife Conservation Society

* Indicates alternate representative

V. MEETING DATES

(See Page 209 of the 2002 Open Space Plan for a complete list of committee meetings)

2013 January 25, February 22, March 22, May 3 and May 24

VI. PROJECTS

Introduction: The protection of wildlife and important habitats, the conservation of natural resources and the development of recreational opportunities for each of the

projects listed should be completed in a strategic manner that seeks to be cost-effective and maintain the economic value of the land. The use of other open space protection tools should be considered before land is purchased in fee by the State – especially on active or potentially active timberlands.

Adirondack Mountain Club Lands – The state and the Adirondack Mountain Club are currently engaged in discussions regarding the construction of a new Visitor’s Service Facility and approximately 300 car parking lot to be located on the Club’s Heart Lake property in order 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 the completion of the aforesaid Visitor’s Service Facility and parking lot and that conveyance is approved by the Board of Directors of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

Agricultural Lands – 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 to the 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 in order to enhance future use of the land for agriculture. Funds must 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 – This large contiguous Class I wetland complex in Warren County features a variety of wetland habitat types. The 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.

Bog River/Beaver River Headwater Complex – 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. It 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.

Boeselager Forestry – 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 – 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) – This project includes two parcels of land, one 120 acres situated on the West side of Rollins Pond and the other 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 acquire the land because of an earlier agreement when the state 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 – 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 – 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 – 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.

Northern Flow River Corridors – (Regions 5 and 6) Preserve the open space character and enhance public use of important northern river corridors and adjacent lands. The following four sub-projects have been chosen for conservation action at this time: Deer River, St. Regis, Grasse and Oswegatchie Rivers within the Adirondack Park, all of which contain significant stretches of high quality recreational water particularly well suited for canoeing and angling.

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.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED

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 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 & Wetlands – In addition to these projects the Committee had previously endorsed 5 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. Conserve 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.

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 – 445 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. The protection of these lands will advance the 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

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.

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 need to be protected to ensure the protection of the lakes water quality, view shed, 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.

HUDSON RIVER PROJECTS

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 the protection of the historic viewsheds of the Battlefields, Siege and Surrender of Saratoga in 1777.

Hudson River Access & 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.

SARATOGA COUNTY

Dwaaskill 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. The preserve will afford approximately 5 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. 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, water shed protection as well as providing significant wetlands and natural habitat. Increased public access to both the creeks and the lake are goals 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 organization 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 the 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 into 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 Important Bird Area by Audubon and a New York State Bird Conservation Area. The preserve, managed by the Town and owned by 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 to the protection of agricultural lands for working farms – similar to the protection of forested lands for working forests. Any reasonably viable farmland under consideration should be protected, whenever possible, by the purchase of an easement rather than fee simple acquisition, in order to enhance future use of the land for agriculture.

Wilton Wildlife Preserve & 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 of 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 that are 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 to achieve 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 populations. This Unit is one of the 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 & 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 the 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 Sandplains 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, 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 the 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 the existing recreational opportunities and protect the viewshed from the river corridor. The Open Space Conservancy is currently seeking the 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 close 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, 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.)

Stony Creek Reservoir Natural Area, Town of Clifton Park – Stony Creek Reservoir and its watershed lands cover more than 1000 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.

Long Path – This long distance hiking path currently connects the George Washington Bridge in New Jersey to John Boyd Thatcher State Park in Albany County, mostly following public lands. Ultimately, it is proposed to connect to Whiteface Mountain. Saratoga County’s Green Infrastructure Plan supports extending the path along public roadways and lands including Lake Desolation. Additional trail corridors could be acquired as properties exchange owners. The path would link major landmarks, including Revolutionary War sites and significant geological features.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

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 utilizing 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 as such, the DEC will continue to seek to obtain public fishing rights.

Washington County Grasslands – 4,000 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 provides 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 grassland stewardship strategies. This approach will utilize: 1) Purchase of parcels by fee title and purchase of conservation and management easements from willing landowners; 2) Voluntary agreements between 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 grassland ecosystem. Another approximately 2,000 acres surrounding and buffering the core will remain private land protected under conservation and management easements. Grassland stewardship agreements with willing property owners will be sought throughout the Important Bird Area.

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 utilizing 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 as such, the DEC will continue to seek to obtain public fishing rights.

**WESTERN ADIRONACKS / 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 SiverHerkimer 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 RottonOneida Co.
Robert SeagerOneida Co.
Walter PaulSt. Lawrence Co.
Scott SutherlandSt. Lawrence Co.

COMMISSIONERS’ APPOINTEES

John Bartow, Jr. Tug Hill Commission
Robert Boice Conservation Fund Advisory Board,
.....Commission on Adirondacks in 21st Century
Ted ComstockAdirondack Landowners Association
Brian Dam..... Sportsman – Oneida EMC
Todd Dunham..... Adirondack Conservancy/Land Trust
Robin HoffmanThousand Islands Land Trust
Michele Ledoux....Lewis County Cooperative Extension
Peter O’Shea
..... Resident’s Committee to Protect the Adirondacks
Robert SauerForest Products Industry
William Stage.....
.....Region 6 Fish and Wildlife Management Board
Daniel Tickner Outdoor Recreation Outfitter

DEC REGIONAL CONTACTS – WATERTOWN

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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

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 – Lowville DEC Office

April 17, 2013 – Lowville DEC Office

May 15, 2013 – Lowville DEC office

May 12, 2015 – Lowville DEC office

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 cited 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.

2015 PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS WESTERN ADIRONDACKS/ TUG HILL / EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO / ST. LAWRENCE AND UPPER MOHAWK RIVER VALLIES – REGION 6

NEW PROJECT PROPOSALS

Twitchell Lake Anne LaBastille Estate – This property located on the shore of Twitchell 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 Pigeon Lake Wilderness Area.

Town of Western "Wilderness Camp" – 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.

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 fee and easement acquisitions, baseline information including the condition of habitats and projections of impacts from climate change in coastal 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.

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.

EXISTING PROJECTS

Herkimer Home Viewshed – The project is designed to protect the vistas to the north of the historic General Nicholas Herkimer Home and buffer properties. Herkimer Home Historic Site currently contains the house where General Herkimer lived until his death, after being wounded in the important Battle of Oriskany in 1777, and 165 acres around the parcel.

North Pond Tract –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.

Fort Drum Army Compatible Use Buffer Project – 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 are comprised of 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 very 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 value of the Fort 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 highlights the need for more areas for training. In addition, existing training areas need to be protected from activities on the adjacent private lands, such as housing development, that could end up limiting the kind of training that can be done on lands adjacent to the development.

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

There are two ways this conservation partnership provides significant benefits to dual goals of maintaining/enhancing training capabilities and open space/conservation values. First, purchase of lands in fee or easement for conservation purposes, adjacent to the Fort, would provide a buffer to development. This 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 fee and easement lands acquired by NYS.

Black Creek Watershed – 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 Route 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 – 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 is a unique river valley within New York State which 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 Watertown and into Lake Ontario. It provides a riverine corridor used for fishing, canoeing, white water rafting, kayaking and scenic viewing along its 114 mile length, as well as energy generation and water supply. It links, economically, socially and environmentally, the communities that line its banks.

This project began with an 1850-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 lands 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 3000 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 the 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.

Northern Flow River Corridors (Joint Region 5 & 6 Priority Project) – 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: Deer, St. Regis, Grass, 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.

Bog River/Beaver River Headwater Complex (Joint Region 5 & 6 Priority Project) – Preserve the open space character of the remaining private lands bordering Bog River Flow in St. Lawrence County through the acquisition of fee and/or easement parcels.

Recreational Trail Linkages & Networks (Joint Region 5 & 6 & 7 Priority Project) – Long distance trail linkages and networks, (including water routes) for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational uses (such as hiking, skiing, biking, snowmobiling, canoeing, equestrians and other appropriate uses) are important as a way for local communities to benefit from neighboring State lands. Trails of interest in Northern New York portions of Regions 5, 6 and 7 include North Country National Scenic Trail, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, the Mohawk Valley Heritage Trail and 3 Blueway Trails and 15 Scenic Byways. 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 into 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 to use the trails.

Massawepie Mire – 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 pressures. 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, and none planned for the future. 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, it is expected that the current use and protection of the property will remain stable.

Rome Sand Plains – Acreage owned by the DEC and The Nature Conservancy should be added in order to protect the unique ecological, historical, geological and scenic characteristics of the area and provide for public use opportunities. To date, 1372 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.

Working Forest Lands – Acquire, own, manage and increase acreage involved in working forest easements on large tracts of available timber production lands to minimize development, provide recreational opportunities where appropriate, and maintain timber producing lands in private ownership.

State Park Battlefields – 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 (2) parcels with an acreage of 175 acres.

Inman Gulf – 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.

Moose River Corridor – 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.

St. Lawrence River Islands, Shorelines and Wetlands – On the St. Lawrence River, including

the Thousands Islands portion of the river, 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 to 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 are 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, lands 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 the ecological connectivity across the Frontenac Arch, an area extending from the Adirondacks to Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario.

Lake Ontario and Lake Erie Shorelines, Islands and Niagara River (Joint Region 6, 7, 8 & 9 Priority Project) –

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. The near shore areas provide spawning and nursery habitat for the various fish species including those that are threatened and endangered such as the lake sturgeon. This area also provides nesting, feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl. 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. The lake plain and escarpment 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. This system begins at the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson County and

extends to New York/Pennsylvania border on Lake Erie. 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 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 Pond, South 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. Over 100 Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats have been designated within this system. Point Peninsula in Region 6 provides important winter concentration area for arctic breeding hawks and owls. 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 3 ½ miles by 1 ½ 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.

Tug Hill Core Forests and Headwater Streams (Joint Region 6 &7 Priority Project) – The Tug Hill Plateau is a large, undeveloped forested area that serves as 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, 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 wide range of recreational opportunities.

REGION 6 PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECT SUMMARY

Project	County(s)	Resource Area	Existing Protection	Threat/Resource Need
Massawepie Mire	St. Lawrence	Adirondack Park	Currently held in large tracts for timber production and recreation and the current owners have no plans to develop or subdivide.	Subdivision & development of surrounding lands. State to acquire, own and manage a combination of fee & easement 10,000 ± acres of land to prevent future development and provide for long-term public use & enjoyment.
State Park Battlefields (Sackets Harbor & Oriskany)	Jefferson Oneida	State Park adjacent	Core park area is state-owned. Adjoining areas are unprotected.	Intensive development on adjoining parcels. State to acquire & manage adjoining parcels Oriskany – 145 acres.
St. Lawrence Islands, Shorelines & Wetlands	Jefferson St. Lawrence	St. Lawrence Recreationway & Access	State of New York and Thousand Islands Land Trust own minimal land and easements.	Future development. T. I. Land Trust & State of New York will independently acquire fee and easement on critical open space parcels within the St. Lawrence River corridor.
Rome Sand Plains	Oneida	Exceptional Biological & Natural Site	Portion of the area owned by the Nature Conservancy & State. Balance of area currently held in private ownership.	Development and sand mining. State and The Nature Conservancy will jointly acquire in fee separate parcels totaling approximately 3,000 acres extending from Huckleberry Swamp south to Wood Creek and west to East Branch Fish Creek, to adequately protect and provide for public use of this exceptional site. The project area includes the Wood Creek, Brandy Brook and lower Fish Creek Corridors.
Great Lakes Shoreline and Niagara River	Jefferson	Great Lakes Shoreline and Islands	Private ownership	Undeveloped islands, shorelines, lands adjacent to State Parks and wetlands properties are a scarce resource and represent natural habitats, scenic beauty and potential recreational areas.

Northern Flow River Corridors: Grass, Oswegatchie, St. Regis, Deer, Raquette Rivers and Little Rivers (located in Town of Fine, St. Lawrence Co.)	St. Lawrence	Adirondack Park	Currently held in large tract for timber production. Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act.	Development of the shoreline in the corridors. State of New York to acquire, own and manage a mixture of fee and easements in river corridors from headwaters downstream to Adirondack Park boundary.
Working Forest Lands	Herkimer Lewis Oneida St. Lawrence	Adirondack Park and Tug Hill	Currently held in large tracts for timber production and recreation.	Subdivision and development of timber lands. State to acquire, own and manage working forest easements on large tracts of available timber land to minimize development, provide for public recreational opportunity where appropriate and maintain timber producing lands in private ownership.
Bog River/Beaver River Headwater Complex	St. Lawrence	Adirondack Park	Large tracts in private ownership, managed for timber production.	Subdivision and shoreline development. Acquire remaining private lands bordering Bog River Flow in fee and/or easement.
Inman Gulf	Jefferson Lewis	Tug Hill Plateau	Mixed parcels of State Reforestation, County reforestation and private lands.	Subdivision and development. Acquire in fee and/or easement 2000± acres along Inman Gulf from Barnes Corners downstream to Rodman.
Moose River Corridor	Herkimer Oneida Lewis	Adirondack Park	Large tracts in private ownership, managed for timber production.	Subdivision and shoreline development. Acquire in fee/and easement lands along Moose River from Rondaxe Lake and Fulton Chain downstream to confluence with Black River.
Tug Hill Core Forests & Headwater Streams	Herkimer Jefferson Lewis Oneida	Tug Hill Plateau	Mixed parcels of State Reforestation, and private lands. Large tracts in private timber production.	Subdivision and development. Acquire key parcels in easement and/or fee to maintain timber producing lands in private ownership.
Recreational Trail Linkages & Networks	Herkimer, Oneida	Trailways & Greenways and Waterways		Long distance trail linkages and networks are important as a way for local communities to benefit from neighboring state lands.

e-Appendix A – REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES' 2013 REPORTS

Fort Drum Army Compatible Use Buffer	Jefferson	Wildlife habitat and biodiversity	Existing State reforestation and private ownership.	Protect the current open character of the area.
Black Creek Watershed	Herkimer	Recreation-way and watershed	Existing State lands on Hinckley Reservoir.	Over development of shoreline/protection of habitat.
Black River Valley & Corridor	Jefferson Lewis Oneida	Black River Recreational access and wildlife habitat	State fishing access sites and boat launches, Blueway designation	Over development of shoreline/protection of habitat, fragmentation of ecological connectivity corridors between the Adirondacks and Tug Hill.
Herkimer Home Viewshed	Herkimer	State Park adjacent	Core park area is state-owned. Adjoining areas are unprotected.	Intensive development on adjoining parcels. State to acquire & manage parcels to the north of the historic General Nicholas Herkimer Home. 165 acres.
North Pond Tract	Herkimer	Adirondack Park	Private ownership	Forest preserve on three sides and likely subject to development pressure if it becomes available on the open market. 1,474 acres in a block.
Twitchell Lake Anne LaBastille Estate	Herkimer	Adirondack Park and Recreational Access	Private ownership	Owner indicated in will that she would like the preservation of this property to continue; it provides waterfront on Twitchell Lake and access from lake to Pigeon Lake Wilderness Area.
Town of Western "Wilderness Camp"	Oneida	Tug Hill Plateau	Owners have done a good job but need to sell. Property has a scenic waterfall.	Mixed parcels provide better access to consolidation of Buck Hill and Clark Hill State Forests.

Riparian buffers and wetland protection projects	Herkimer, Oneida, Lewis, Jefferson, St Lawrence	Environmental Protection and sustainability	State, federal and Local Regulations about building in these areas	This focuses on protecting wetlands, floodplain forests and lake shore coastlines as our first line of defense to protect adjacent private property and communities from increased storm intensity, flooding and rising coastlines.
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CENTRAL NEW YORK – REGION 7 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee

COUNTIES

BROOME, CAYUGA, CHENANGO, CORTLAND, MADISON,
OSWEGO, ONONDAGA, TIOGA, TOMPKINS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MEMBER	AFFILIATION
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

NAME	TITLE	AGENCY	LOCATION
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 – DEC Cortland Office

March 26, 2013 – DEC Cortland Office

April 16, 2013 – DEC Cortland Office May 16, 2013 – DEC Cortland Office

2013 CENTRAL NEW YORK PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Immediately following the title of a priority project, the agency or agencies involved and whether it is a new, modified or continuing project are shown in parentheses.

Regions 3, 4, and 7

Delaware River Branches and Main-stem Corridors (DEC, continuing) – 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. These 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 – Multi-Regional priority project which 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 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, one of only four possible breeding records for the NYS endangered loggerhead shrike during 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 (DEC, continuing)

– 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 the 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 & 9

LAKE ONTARIO AND LAKE ERIE SHORELINE AND ISLANDS AND NIAGARA RIVER {89}– This is 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. The near shore areas provide spawning and nursery habitat for the various fish species including those that are threatened and endangered such as the lake sturgeon. This area also provides nesting, feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl. 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. The lake plain and escarpment 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. This system begins at the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson County and extends to New York/Pennsylvania border on Lake Erie. 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 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. 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 3 ½ miles by 1 ½ 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 6 & 7

Tug Hill Core Forests and Headwater Streams (DEC, continuing) – 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, 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 wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities. The State is currently (2013) pursuing the acquisition of two parcels in Oswego County, both adjacent to existing state forests. Formerly owned by Harden Furniture, they have recently come on the market again.

Region 7

Camillus Valley/Nine Mile Creek (DEC, continuing) – Onondaga County, Towns of Camillus, Marcellus, and Geddes. Expansion of recent acquisitions by DEC and a local land trust to 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.

Southern Skaneateles Lake Forest and Shoreline (??) – The Skaneateles Highlands encompass the scenic terrain extending from Carpenter’s Falls in 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 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, as well as 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.

Develop a State Park In Cortland County (OPRHP – Central, continuing) – 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 and the surrounding regions to access and enjoy the splendor of Cortland County.

Fair Haven Beach State Park – (OPRHP-Finger Lakes, continuing) –Fair Haven Beach State Park in Cayuga County is a highly utilized 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 (DEC & OPRHP, continuing) – 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. Utilizing 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 (DEC, continuing) – 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 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 (DEC, continuing) – 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 the protection and enhancement of 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 included Henslow's sparrows and northern harriers.

Old Erie Canal State Historic Park Trailhead Development, Buffer & Historic Protection (OPRHP – Central, continuing) – Includes several properties adjacent to the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park within the Central New York Region where acquisition will provide opportunities for trailhead development and/or historic site protection buffering from future encroachment.

Peter Scott Swamp (DEC, continuing) – 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 (DEC, continuing) – 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.

State Parks Greenbelt/Tompkins County (OPRHP – Finger Lakes, continuing) – 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 (OPRHP & DEC, continuing) – 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 there, including the globally rare Spreading Globeflower. Forests in and around nearby Summerhill State Forest also have been recognized for biological significance through the National Audobon 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 their 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 the 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.

Region 7 & 8

Emerald Necklace (DEC & OPRHP – continuing) – The Emerald Necklace is an arc of forested hills and valleys stretching from east to west in the vicinity of Ithaca. Within this crescent 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 Crescent are identified in the 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 utilize this area, ranging from a full array of nesting neotropical songbirds to an increasing number of black bears. Public lands within the crescent 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 SF), cross country skiing (particularly at Hammond Hill SF) 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 between 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 development of 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 (DEC & OPRHP – continuing) – While the Finger Lakes Region is identified in the 2002 Plan as a Major Resource Area (pg. 296), and strategies such as acquisition of additional public access and consolidation of existing State projects are mentioned, the shorelines of these unique lakes are tied up in private ownership to a degree seldom seen in other states, so that most citizens have little direct experience of these beautiful lakes, even though their length provides hundreds of miles of shoreline. 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. Forested areas along and above the lakeshores provide habitat for raptors and neotropical songbirds.

Projects to preserve portions of the shoreline of these lakes for public access or wildlife could utilize acquisitions, easements, or additions to existing public segments. Parties including New York State, local governments, and non-profit organizations need to be prepared to capitalize on opportunities which will become increasingly critical as shoreline development and prices continue to climb. 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, birdwatching, 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.
- **On 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.

- **Extending the eastern terminus of the Outlet Trail to the Seneca Lake shoreline at Dresden** (Region 8).
- Additional analysis is needed in order to identify other priority sites, especially on **Seneca 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 remaining Finger Lake lacking a public trailered boat launch facility.

Northern Montezuma Wetlands (DEC – continuing) – 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 lies within its own Major Resource Area: The Montezuma Marshes. Partners involved are the US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS), 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 US FWS, purchase of conservation easements by government and not-for-profit partners, and execution of Cooperative Management Agreements between partners and landowners. State funding can be matched with federal funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. State funds have also been committed to the development of a new environmental education facility here.

Region 7,8 & 9

Onondaga Escarpment – 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:

- **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 in order to protect these critical resources.
- **Buttermilk Falls** on Oatka Creek is 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 is a 100 plus-acre property located in the Town of LeRoy, Genesee County and has been on the US 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 is 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 presumably 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 1828 on 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 70–80 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 utilized by Native Americans for making arrow heads and other tools and is the only major flint quarry in Western New York.

***SEE PROJECT CHART SUMMARY AT THE END OF REPORT
SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECTS****

Baltimore Woods – Town of Marcellus, Onondaga County. Acquisition of lands adjacent to the Baltimore Woods Nature Center for use in educational activities and to buffer existing lands.

Beaver Lake Nature Center – Town of Lysander, Onondaga County. Completion of efforts to acquire ecological and physical buffers to existing lands at the Nature Center and to gain holdings of additional habitat types.

Caughdenoy Dam – Town of Schroepfel, Oswego County. Acquisition of fishing access on the Oneida River.

Chenango River – Town of Lebanon, Madison County. Acquisition of fishing access at Randallsville on the Chenango River.

Fall Creek Fens and Forests – Town of Cortlandville, Cortland County, Towns of Dryden and Groton and Village of Freeville, Tompkins County. Expansion of efforts for the protection of the exceptional grouping of ecological communities and geological features along Fall Creek and its tributaries, and along Beaver Brook and its tributaries including

the acquisition of lands adjacent to the Lime Hollow Nature Center for use in educational activities and to buffer existing lands. The area contains numerous and varied fens, bogs, swamps and glacial landforms.

FLLT Biodiversity Site – Town of Danby, Tompkins County. State acquisition of a conservation easement over the Finger Lakes Land Trust's Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.

Fischer Old Growth Forest – Town of Newfield, Tompkins County. Protection of sufficient buffer for old growth forest on slopes above Cayuga Inlet.

Mud Pond (Silver Lake) Fen – Town of Oswego, Oswego County. Protection of rare plant and animal habitat at Mud Pond (Silver Lake).

Muskrat Creek Canoe Trail Project – Town of Cato, Cayuga County. Acquisition of access points to create or enhance canoeing and kayaking opportunities between Parker's Pond and the Seneca River as proposed by Cayuga County.

Old Fly Marsh – Town of Pompey, Onondaga County. Acquisition of additional lands at Save The County's preserve at this site.

Paine Creek Old Growth Forest – Town of Ledyard, Cayuga County. Protection of old growth forest in the ravine along Paine's Creek on the east side of Cayuga Lake.

Purchase & reclamation of Homer Man-made Ponds – Town of Homer, Cortland County. Purchase and reclaim the man-made ponds in Homer to create fishing and recreational opportunities. These ponds were created when NYSDOT mined the gravel needed to construct Interstate 81, and have little or no access for swimming or canoeing.

Tioughnioga River Access – Cortland County. Develop access points along the Tioughnioga River in order to create fishing and recreational opportunities in conjunction with local government development of a trail along the river to access one of the most important natural resources in Cortland County.

Tracey Lake – Town of Tully, Onondaga County. Protection of sufficient buffer around the Tully Lakes, a group of kettlehole lakes in a segment of the Valley Heads moraine.

Tully Valley/Onondaga Creek Conservation Initiative – Towns of Tully, Lafayette, Onondaga and the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County. Onondaga Creek runs from Route 80 North through the Tully Valley, Onondaga Nation and City of Syracuse eventually reaching Onondaga Lake. Open Space preservation is important to preserve existing open space and further protect the Creek and the Lake. Areas of special interest include

farmland protection, Fellows Falls, Emerson Gulf, open space currently owned by Honeywell, and potential urban open space opportunities along Onondaga Creek in the City of Syracuse.

** The Regional Committee reviewed and consolidated the supplemental project list for the 2009 Plan to remove completed projects and eliminate duplication of projects. Chenango Valley State Park, and Fort Ontario and Lorenzo State Historic Sites were removed from the list because they were covered by the statewide priority project: State Park & Historic Site Protection {131}. McDonald's Point on Cayuga Lake, and Owasco Flats were removed because they are covered in the Finger Lakes Shoreline priority project. Michigan Hollow is covered by the Emerald Necklace priority project and Beaver Brook Wetlands Complex was combined in the Fall Creek Fens and Forests supplemental project.*

e-Appendix A – REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES’ 2013 REPORTS

REGION 7 PROJECTS	CATEGORY	COUNTY(S)/TOWN	RESOURCE AREA	EXISTING PROTECTION	OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE
Camillus Valley/ Nine Mile Creek	Greenways	Onondaga County Towns of Camillus, Marcellus & Geddes	NY Canal/Rec	Partial	Protective Buffer & Public Recreation
Southern Skaneateles Lake Forest and Shoreline	Watershed Protection and Access	Onondaga, Cortland and Cayuga Counties	Finger Lakes	Partial	Watershed Protection & Public Recreation
State Park in Cortland County	Parklands	Cortland County	Resource of Statewide Importance	None	Public Recreation
Fair Haven Beach State Park	Parklands	Cayuga County Town of Sterling	Great Lakes Shoreline, Islands & Tributaries	Partial	Protective Buffer & Public Recreation
Genny Green Trail/Link Trail	Trailways	Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga Counties	North Country National Scenic Trail/Trails	Partial	Public Recreation
Nelson Swamp	Unique Area	Madison County Towns of Cazenovia, Fenner & Nelson	Exceptional Biological and Natural Sites	Partial	Protection of Area of Ecological Significance
North Shore Oneida Lake	Enhancement of Public Lands	Oswego County, Towns of Constantia, West Monroe & Hastings	NY Canal/Rec	Partial	Shoreline Protection, Public Access & Wildlife Management
Old Erie Canal	Parklands	Onondaga & Madison Counties, Towns of Manlius & Sullivan	NY Canal/Rec	Partial	Protective Buffer & Public Recreation
Peter Scott Swamp	Freshwater Wetlands	Oswego County Town of Schroepfel	NY Canal/Rec	Partial	Protection & Management of Wildlife Habitat
Salmon River Corridor	Greenways	Oswego County, Towns of Albion, Orwell, Redfield, & Richland	Salmon River Corridor	Partial	Protective Buffer & Public Recreation
State Parks Greenbelt	Parklands	Tompkins County, Towns of Enfield, Ithaca, Ulysses & City of Ithaca	Finger Lakes	Partial	Protective Buffer & Public Recreation
Summerhill Fen & Forest Complex	Exceptional Forest & Plant Community	Cayuga County Towns of Locke & Summerhill	Exceptional Biological & Natural Sites	Partial	Protection of Area of Ecological Significance

MULTIPLE REGION PROJECTS	PROJECT	CATEGORY	COUNTY(S)/TOWN	RESOURCE AREA	EXISTING PROTECTION	OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE
3, 4, 7	Delaware River Branches & Main-stem Corridors	Watershed Protection	Delaware, Broome, Sullivan & Orange Counties	Catskill-Delaware Region	Partial	Public Recreation; and Habitat & Watershed Protection
4,7,8	Upper Susquehanna River Trail	Trailways	Multiple	Upper Susquehanna Rivers	Partial	Public Recreation; and Habitat & Watershed Protection
6, 7, 8, 9	Great Lakes Shorelines & Niagara River	Shoreline Protection	Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Monroe, Wayne, Cayuga, Oswego, Jefferson & St. Lawrence Counties	Great Lakes Shoreline & Island	Partial	Public Recreation & Protection from Development
6, 7	Tug Hill Core Forests & Headwater Streams	Watershed Protection	Oneida, Oswego, Jefferson, & Lewis Counties	Tug Hill Plateau	Partial	Public Recreation & Protection from Development
7, 8	Emerald Necklace	Enhancement of Public Lands	Tompkins, Tioga, & Schuyler Counties	Resource of Statewide Importance	Partial	Public Recreation & Protection from Development
7, 8	Finger Lakes Shoreline	Shoreline Protection	Cayuga, Onondaga, Tompkins, Livingston, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, & Yates	Finger Lakes	Partial	Public Recreation & Protection from Development
7, 8	Northern Montezuma Wetlands	Freshwater Wetlands	Cayuga, Seneca & Wayne Counties	Montezuma Marshes	Partial	Wildlife Management & Public Recreation
7,8,9	Onondaga Escarpment	Parklands	Onondaga, Genesee, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca & Niagara Counties	Resource of Statewide Importance	Partial	Protective Buffer & Public Recreation

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

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 GajewskiLivingston County
Paul A. Johnson\ Rochelle BellMonroe County
Darlys McDonough\ Tom HarveyOntario County
Wayne Hale\ Jim BensleyOrleans County
Frank Sinicropi.....Seneca County
Kate Bartholomew.....Schuyler County
Amy DlugosSteuben County
Brett DeRooWayne County
Robert SchwartingYates County

COMMISSIONERS' APPOINTEES

Bruce GillmanFinger 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’BrienCotton-Hanlon, Inc.
Robert Mauceli.....Rochester Birding Association
John PlummerTown of Greece
Barlow Rhodes.....Fish and Wildlife Management Board
Irene Szabo.....Finger Lakes Trail Conference
Zack Odell\ Andy WheatcraftThe 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, DEC Region 8 Headquarters, Avon

January, 29, 2013, DEC Region 8 Headquarters, Avon

February 20, 2013, Sampson State Park

March 13, 2013, DEC Region 8 Headquarters, Avon

April 24, 2013, Hemlock Canadice State Forest, City of Rochester Water Filtration Facility
on Hemlock Lake, Hemlock

May 8, 2013, DEC Region 8 Headquarters, Avon

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 WILDLIFE 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.

2016 WESTERN FINGER LAKES PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

2016 PRIORITY PROJECTS, STATEWIDE

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (New Statewide Project) – The Committee discussed Environmental Justice issues and the programs role in the open space planning process. The discussions blended with the concept of creating the Genesee River Corridor and its location in the City of Rochester (mentioned below). Specific guidelines on how projects should be evaluated should be developed on a state-wide basis.

GENESEE GREENWAY/RECREATIONWAY (Insert as a Bullet Item under Long Distance Trail Corridors) 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.

2016 PRIORITY PROJECTS, MULTI-REGION

LAKE ONTARIO AND LAKE ERIE SHORELINE, ISLANDS AND NIAGARA RIVER (Regions 6, 7, 8 & 9)

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. The near shore areas, drowned river mouths, and riparian corridors provide spawning and nursery habitat for the various fish species including those that are threatened and endangered such as the lake sturgeon. This area also provides nesting, feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl. 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. The lake plain and escarpment 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. This system begins at the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson County and extends to New York/Pennsylvania border on Lake Erie. 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 Pond, South 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. 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 3 ½ miles by 1 ½ 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.

ONONDAGA ESCARPMENT (Regions 7 and 8) – A group of hard limestones and dolostones of Devonian age, the 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:

- Green Lakes State Park and Minoa Lakes. 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 in order to protect these critical resources.
- Buttermilk Falls on Oatka Creek is 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 is a 100 plus-acre property located in the Town of LeRoy, Genesee County and has been on the US 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 is 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 presumably 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 1828 on 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 70–80 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 utilized by Native Americans for making arrow heads and other tools and is the only major flint quarry in Western New York.

NORTHERN MONTEZUMA WETLANDS (Regions 7 & 8) – 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 US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS), 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 between 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 that was funded by the State and Managed by the Audubon Society.

EMERALD NECKLACE (Regions 7 & 8) – 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 Necklace are identified in the 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 utilize this area, ranging from a full array of nesting neotropical songbirds to an increasing number of black bears. Public lands within the 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 between 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 development of 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 (Regions 7 & 8) – 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 of these beautiful lakes, even though their length provides hundreds of miles of shoreline. The steep slopes and riparian zones offer majestic views of the lakes along with the 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. More than 10,000 acres in Livingston and Ontario counties surrounding Hemlock and Canadice Lakes (Hemlock-Canadice State Forest) and covering the southern end of Honeoye Lake are included in this unique project. The project includes more than 7,000 acres of land surrounding Hemlock and Canadice Lakes. Nearly 3,000 acres of land at the southern end of Honeoye Lake include parcels adjacent to existing State holdings (Honeoye Inlet WMA and Harriet Hollister Spencer State Park) 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 provide habitat for raptors and neotropical songbirds, including the threatened Cerulean Warbler (especially southern Skaneateles Lake). 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 often stopping along shoulderless 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, towns, and non-profit organizations need to 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 similar recreational as those listed above. While it is not possible to predict future opportunities, several potential lakeshore protection projects can be listed now: 1. Camp Barton – a Boy Scout camp with extensive frontage on Cayuga Lake (Region 7). NYS Parks is interested in acquiring this property, 2. On Cayuga Lake (Region 7), a tract owned by NYSEG and including 500 acres and 3,000 feet of undeveloped lake frontage in the Town of Lansing has already been identified as a priority, 3. Extending the eastern terminus of the Outlet Trail to the Seneca Lake shoreline at Dresden, 4. Leedy's Roseroot, isolated

shoreline cliffs on the west side of Seneca Lake in Yates County, and 5. The Keuka Bluffs (Keuka Lake) in the Town of Jerusalem, Yates County.

GENESEE RIVER CORRIDOR (Regions 8 & 9) – 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 Waterfalls of Letchworth State Park, the verdant valley of open grasslands and farm fields along Nations Road in Geneseo (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. 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).

TONAWANDA CREEK WATERSHED (Regions 8 and 9) – 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 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 over 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 that are found scattered amongst the second growth forest. The Tonawanda Creek system faces threats from new development, bank erosion, pollution problems and storm water runoff.

2016 PRIORITY PROJECTS, REGION 8

CATHARINE VALLEY COMPLEX – 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 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.

HIGH-TOR/ BRISTOL HILLS /BARE HILL STATE UNIQUE AREA – 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 the glaciers. The area offers exceptional scenic vistas of the Naples Valley, Canandaigua Lake and Honeoye Lake, and provides opportunities to preserve working forest lands. The area also has high ecological values: the NYS Natural Heritage Program, working under contract to The Nature Conservancy, has identified the 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 the 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 areas attracting visitors from a wide area. 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 in this area of increasing development pressures. The increasing 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, the Bristol Hills, Bare Hill, and Yates Reforestation Area will provide important migration corridors for species.

SENECA ARMY DEPOT CONSERVATION AREA Located in the Towns of Varick and Romulus, Seneca County, this project is necessary to protect a unique population of white deer. The

lands comprised part of a U.S. Army installation developed in the early 1940s and closed in the 1990's. The land is traversed by tributaries of four streams, and contains a 60-acre pond and over 1000 acres of wetlands. 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 area also provides habitat for many species of birds and small game including bald eagles and ospreys. As plans are devised for the development of the Depot, this project offers a unique open space opportunity as well as significant historical and wildlife values.

CHEMUNG RIVER GREENBELT –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 connect 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. The 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. Additional boat launches and fishing access points along the Canisteo and Cohocton as addition 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, 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 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.

WOLF GULLY – 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 Gully has exceptional biological diversity, most notably in ferns where 31 species have been described over the years.

WESTBURY BOG – 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. This species was 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 between state and federal agencies, landowners and local colleges to achieve conservation objectives will likely be more successful than individual actions.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITY PROJECTS

The Committee recommends that the following projects be included as Additional Projects in the 2016 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan:

LITTLE LAKES CORRIDOR – This corridor is comprised of six parcels of land in Steuben and Schuyler counties, currently owned by New York State Electric and Gas Corp. (NYSEG), and connecting Waneta, Lamoka and Keuka lakes. The properties include an abandoned generation plant and surrounding land on Keuka Lake; a canal connecting the plant and Waneta Lake; parcels on and around Waneta and Lamoka Lakes and Bradford Dam and surrounding wetlands. This corridor is an important open space project because of the habitat it provides, the glacial geologic features present and the opportunity to develop a trail along the corridor to Keuka Lake and connecting with the Finger Lakes Trail.

ZURICH BOG – This property is owned and managed in part by the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society, Inc. The unique wetland/bog community includes sphagnum muskeg, shrub bog, bog forest, and swamp forest vegetative types. It is located in Wayne County in one of the two outstanding drumlin fields in North America. It is also the resident habitat of an endangered species. Wetland drainage activities have threatened the natural values of this area. Proposed is the purchase of easements and land in fee to provide additional protection to this unique resource.

PINNACLE HILL – Pinnacle Hill is comprised of about 33 acres within the City of Rochester, Monroe County and the Town of Brighton. This site is a kame developed during the last glacial period in this area. It is part of the Pinnacle Range which includes Cobb's Hill, Highland Park, and Mount Hope Cemetery. This hill is characterized by steep and erodible slopes that are held in place by a mature deciduous woodland. Pinnacle Hill has the highest elevation in the Town of Brighton. Because of its natural characteristics, the danger of erosion from development and the magnificent view to the south from its slopes, Pinnacle Hill was listed as a “High Priority” site for preservation measures in the report, Preservation of Environmentally Sensitive Areas in Monroe County.

GREAT BEND – This project is located in the Town of Mendon, Monroe County and is bordered on the north and east by a Lehigh Valley railroad bed right-of-way and adjacent to the Totiakton Native American site on the west. A drumlin is present on the site and Honeoye Creek runs through the more than 230 acre parcel. The parcel has a diversity of environmental features ranging from dense woodlands, some on steep slopes, to open meadow found along the railroad bed. These features provide excellent habitat for plants, birds and animals. Protection of this site by county, town or land trust acquisition is recommended.

RITA SHAW ESTATE – The Rita Shaw Estate is approximately 29 acres and is one of the last large wooded tracts in the Town of Irondequoit, Monroe County. This site has a very high potential for development. There are three steep-sloped ridges, one of which is an esker, two large valleys and two winding streams on the estate. The oak-hickory climax woodland has oaks that are an estimate 200 to 250 years old. Some oaks have a thirteen to fourteen foot circumference. Other trees found on-site include tulip poplar, maple, beech, pine, aspen, ash, and cottonwood. The understory consists of dogwood, spice bush, arrowwood, honeysuckle, barberry, and sumac. In addition, there are protected ferns and fields of wildflowers that make this an attractive site.

SUMMIT WETLANDS – This parcel located near the Erie Canal in the Town of Brighton, Monroe County. The parcel has had in the past a very vigorous population of Western Chorus Frogs (WCF). The WCF population has diminished over the last two years due to habitat removal in the southeast area of the parcel. This entire area is a wooded wetland.

SPRING FARMS – Spring Farms, located in the Town of Arcadia, Wayne County and Town of Phelps, Ontario County comprises roughly 112 acres. The property is currently owned by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. The parcel is partially wooded and contains a moderately sized pond. The area is proposed for acquisition with a goal of expanding recreational opportunities in the region. The area would be well suited for acquisition by a public entity or non-governmental organization whose focus is on fostering open space activities.

WESTERN NEW YORK – REGION 9
Regional Open Space Advisory Committee

COUNTIES

ALLEGANY, CATTARAUGUS, CHAUTAUQUA, ERIE, NIAGARA, WYOMING

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COMMITTEE MEETINGS

March 21, 2013
Roger Tory Peterson Institute
Jamestown, Chautauqua County

March 26, 2013
Woodlawn Beach State Park
Blasdell, Erie County

April 10, 2013
Crossroads Center
Belmont, Allegany County

April 18, 2008
Cattaraugus County Office Building
Little Valley, Cattaraugus County

April 25, 2013
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Warsaw, Wyoming County

May 1, 2013
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lockport, Niagara County

May 8, 2013
Concord Town Hall
Springville, Erie County

May 16, 2013
Concord Town Hall
Springville, Erie County

October 22, 2014
Concord Town Hall
Springville, Erie County

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 a 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.

WESTERN NEW YORK 2013 PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Region 9

TONAWANDA CREEK WATERSHED (Regions 8 & 9) – 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 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 over 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 that are found scattered amongst the second growth forest. The Tonawanda Creek system faces threats from new development, bank erosion, pollution problems and storm water runoff.

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT – 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 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 – 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.

BUFFALO RIVER WATERSHED – 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 low mobility citizens and for the ecological and green infrastructure functions they provide to the region. Without protection from further development these relatively undisturbed areas could further degrade the Buffalo River, rather than achieving 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 establishing 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 – 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 high priority. The system also provides watershed protection and access to Lake Erie by boaters. The creek and its tributaries includes habitat that is currently utilized 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 –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 only accessible to angling 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 lakes tributaries are a concern and may be addressed by easements or acquisition to protect riparian and upland habitat such as head water forests on the lakes tributaries.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY GREENWAY PLAN – 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 – 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 – 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 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 – 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 – 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:

1. Bear Lake (Chautauqua County)– shoreline protection and public access
2. Cassadaga lakes (Chautauqua County)– shoreline protection
3. Cuba Lake (Allegany County)– shoreline protection
4. Chautauqua Lake– (Chautauqua County)– shoreline protection
5. Findley Lake (Chautauqua County)– shoreline protection and public access
6. Silver Lake (Wyoming County)– shoreline protection

LAKE ERIE TRIBUTARY GORGES – 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 + plus 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 eastside 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.

TRAILS & TRAILWAYS – 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 in order to meet public demand for recreational trail use.

Projects include but are not limited to:

- Multi-use trails
- Equestrian Trails
- Erie Catt Rail Trail
- Niagara River Greenway (add Riverkeeper projects here mentioned in letter)
- Triple Divide and WAG
- Genesee Valley Greenway State Park
- WNY Greenway
- Chautauqua County Greenway System

SIGNIFICANT WETLANDS – 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 – 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. The protection of wildlife habitat associated with urban wetlands often requires wetland acquisition and the 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 jet skis.

Grand Island Habitat–Large wooded wetland tracts on the south west 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 nonpoint 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 in order to accommodate successional 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. This area 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 her 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 the 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 renaturalization including daylighting of buried sections, de-channelization, implementation of effective floodplain and buffer systems and habitat connectivity.

Regions 8 & 9

GENESEE RIVER CORRIDOR (Regions 8 & 9) – 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 Geneseo (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. 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 maintain and build trails.

TONAWANDA CREEK WATERSHED – This project would serve to protect one of the major tributaries of the Niagara River in Genesee, Erie and Niagara Counties. Tonawanda Creek and its four major tributaries; Ellicott Creek, Mud Creek, Murder Creek and Ransom Creek, 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 longear sunfish (threatened), the brindled madtom (special concern), and more than 20 species of freshwater mussels. 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 that are found scattered amongst the second growth forest. The Tonawanda Creek system faces threats from new development, bank erosion, pollution problems and storm water runoff.

Regions 6, 7, 8 & 9

LAKE ONTARIO AND LAKE ERIE SHORELINE, ISLANDS AND NIAGARA RIVER – 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. The near shore areas provide spawning and nursery habitat for the various fish species including those that are threatened and endangered such as the lake sturgeon. This area also provides nesting, feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl. 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. The lake plain and escarpment 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

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 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 will be maintained as urban areas demonstrate increasing demand for swimming, boating and fishing opportunities. 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 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 Pond, South 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. 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 3 ½ miles by 1 ½ 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.

Multi-Region Recommendations:

STATE FOREST, UNIQUE AREA & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA PROTECTION – State Forests, Unique Areas, and Wildlife Management Areas provide valuable natural, cultural and recreation resources that are enjoyed by millions of visitors each year. Protection and enhancement of existing State Forests, Unique and Wildlife Management Areas is critical to long term stewardship of these resources. It is important to improve access, eliminate in-holdings and provide buffers to protect the resources as well as to enhance recreational and cultural opportunities. Balance the use of state forests for resource extraction (brine, gas, timber) with the need to better manage state lands to increase and enhance ecological services and habitat for priority species.

NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM – 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 to the completion of the Canal Trail within the Canal Recreationway has been committed. Also, federal legislation has been passed that recognizes the national significance of the waterway and adjacent lands.

In May, 2005, Governor Pataki announced the creation of the Erie Canal Greenway. The new Canal Greenway initiative will be the first key step in realizing Governor Pataki's long-term plans to create an "Empire State Greenway." The Empire State Greenway will be comprised of three distinct parts – the Erie Canal Greenway, Niagara Greenway and Hudson Valley Greenway. Each of the Greenways, while continuing to operate separately, will collectively represent one of the largest Greenways 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. The 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 US 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" to unite and coordinate existing federal, state, and local plans and multiple points of view, focusing on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and build on mutual interests. In June 2005, a Draft Preservation and Management Plan and Environmental Assessment were released for public review and comment.

WORKING FOREST LANDS – Recent trends in the forest products industry suggest that 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 over 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) the acquisition of development rights whereby any commercial or residential development of those lands is prevented with the exception of that associate with continued timber production; 2) public recreational rights i.e. 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 the following conditions:

1. 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;
2. The lands must be of a size and character that are suitable for long-term forest management use;
3. The purchase must be from a willing seller; and
4. Acquisition of fee title to the land or directly adjacent parcels under the same ownership requires separate approval through the Open Space Plan process.
5. Provide resources to develop 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).

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

STATEWIDE FARMLAND PROTECTION – 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 rural communities. A 1997 report by the American Farmland Trust ranked the Hudson Valley as part of the tenth most threatened agricultural region in the country, where prime agricultural soils and suburban development pressures are on a collision course. Many municipalities in the Hudson Valley as well as Saratoga and Washington Counties, and the Agricultural Stewardship Association, a land trust, have generated local funding for farmland protection which could be augmented with State funding. Many regional advisory

committees, including particularly the Region 3, Region 5, Region 8 and Region 9 committees, have noted that the preservation of farmland, in the face of rapid development pressures, is critical to the future of the State. The Region 3, Region 5, Region 8 and Region 9 committees support that any reasonably viable farmland under consideration should be protected, whenever possible, by the purchase of an easement rather than fee simple acquisition, in order to enhance future use of the land for agriculture. *The Region 9 committee further recommended the creation of a “farmland preservation board” in each Region which would encourage municipal and regional collaboration on protecting farmland.* The Governor’s Quality Communities Task Force reached the same conclusion and has made many recommendations to improve the viability of farming in New York, which are discussed in the Plan. The Plan has long recognized the importance agriculture and how it contributes to the protection of open space in New York State.

- **Urban Community Gardens** – defined by Agriculture & Markets Law Article 2-C, 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 storm water run-off, 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 currently underutilized mechanisms for protecting community gardens and urban farms. Trust for Public Land has pioneered community garden land trusts in New York State by acquiring 64 community gardens in NYC and partnering with community gardeners to create three community-based not-for-profits to own and operate the gardens. These are the only land trust community gardens currently operating in New York State urban areas. This project in part aims to provide permanent access to land for use as community gardens and urban farms.

LONG DISTANCE TRAIL CORRIDORS – Land and water trail corridors provide important connections between 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, natural enthusiasts, kayakers, and other motorized and non-motorized users. 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 utilized 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 the interim upgrades of the corridor for the creation of multi-use trails. These are generally one time opportunities that need to 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 Trail, Long Path Trail, Highlands Trail, Finger Lakes Trail, Erie Canalway, Long Island Greenbelt Trail System and North Country National Scenic Trail are just a few of the many trail systems in which it is important to provide permanent public access and safe travel routes. This project is intended to provide permanent public access and safe travel routes for long distance trails such as:

- The **Appalachian Trail**; a continuous 2,100 mile trail from Mount Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia. 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.
- The **Long Path** is a hiking corridor with the vision of linking New York City with the Adirondacks. Currently the Long Path has been established from the City extending through the Catskill Park and north into Albany County, some 330 miles. This project will also provide watershed protection, including the New York City watershed, as well as enhancing access to State Forests and other public lands. The Long Path is the main north/south trail corridor in New York State; protection, by public ownership, will ensure continued recreational opportunities and watershed protection for generations to come.
- The **Finger Lakes Trail** is 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. Increased public ownership and easements will protect this valuable and unique hiking experience.
- **Erie Canal Greenway** see discussion in NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM. The Genny-Green Trail/Link Trail is a multiple use, long distance trail system that 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.
- The **Long Island Greenbelt Trail System** is a recreational and educational footpath network, which is accessible to approximately 2 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.
- The **North Country National Scenic Trail** is a 4,600 mile trail that winds from the plains of North Dakota through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and into Western New York where it follows the route of the Finger Lakes Trail until the NCT veers northward toward the Adirondacks. The eventual Adirondack route remains a topic of study, but the Congressionally mandated eastern end is at Crown Point.
 - The **Remsen–Lake Placid Travel Corridor** is a 122 mile long abandoned railroad corridor which traverses some of the most remote lands of the Adirondack Park.
 - The **Northville–Lake Placid Trail** is a long distance hiking and backpacking trail that extends 133 miles from Northville to Lake Placid.

STATEWIDE SMALL PROJECTS – This category includes nine subcategories 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, trail and Greenway Connections, stream buffer easements, important birding areas, and aquatic connectivity. Individual items within this project are not to exceed \$250,000 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. *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 access severely limited 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 at \$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:** Protects 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, Finger Lakes Trail; to make connections between trails, and fill gaps in greenway corridors such as the Niagara River Greenway.

Example: A 4-acre parcel in the Town of Arkwright, Chautauqua 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. Greater financial 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. 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:** Provide additional protection through acquisition or easement for areas designated as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) which are currently unprotected. These areas have received the recognition of being IBAs under the Audubon Societies program which recognizes that these sites provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds. These sites provide habitat for one or more of the following activities; breeding, wintering , and/or migratory use and generally have unique qualities which them important for birds.
- 9) Aquatic Connectivity (Culvert removal/ fish passage):** Removal of priority barriers will help to create connectivity and improve success of native and naturalized fish species. Both in-stream and riparian habitat improvement will also aid in the viability of maintaining these important species in our region.

CHANGES TO REGION 9/WNY DESCRIPTION ON PAGE 111

The Committee recommends removing the current opening paragraph under the heading “Region9/Western New York” on Page 111 of the 2009 NYS Open Space Conservation Plan and replacing it with the updated paragraph below:

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.

WESTERN NEW YORK MEETING MINUTES

NY Open Space Conservation Public Meeting

Chautauqua County

Roger Tory Peterson Institute

March 21, 2013

6:30 PM

In attendance:_(approximately 35)

9 Open Space Committee members

~25 public

2 Media

Meeting Summary:

Paul McKeown opened the meeting with Regional Advisory Committee introductions, and proceeded through a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed the following topics:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Overview of the current plan
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Regional Advisory Committee

- Opportunities for public input and involvement

Mark Geise gave a presentation detailing Chautauqua County's Greenway Plan. A copy of Mark's presentation is available online at <http://www.co.chautauqua.ny.us/departments/planning/Pages/default.aspx>. The comprehensive plan takes into account recreation and transportation, conservation, tourism, economic development and sustainability goals and was developed collaboratively. It includes a resource inventory and needs assessment survey, extensive mapping and aims to establish Chautauqua County as a destination for outdoor and recreational living.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to public input.

Public Input – Summary of Comments and Questions:

- Regarding the Chautauqua County Greenway Plan, there seems to be a hurdle connecting public land systems across private land, how is that handled?
- Are there incentives for landowners to allow use of their land for trail connections? Possibly offering liability insurance or increasing property value because of the value of a trail system on site?
- Does the Greenway plan address other types of spaces beyond those mentioned in the Greenway plan? Such as water access, watersheds (creek, river, buffers)? Can it emphasize Watershed Buffers?
- Regarding the NYS Open Space Plan, does the plan specify the size of land advisable for acquisition/purchase? Can the plan address small acquisitions?
- I think there should be a public education component to the Open Space Plan. People who own land adjacent to shared open space areas such as waterways should be educated on wise land use, ex. using less fertilizer along shorelines. Could the plan help Soil and Water Conservation Districts and USDA NRCS help get the word out about water quality improvement programs and incentives for agricultural practices? I am concerned that there isn't enough education on wise agricultural practices that have the potential to affect water quality.
- The Chautauqua County Environmental Management Council would like to see the escarpment reference kept in the NYS Open space plan. It is an important bird area and something that should be kept in the plan.
- The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is submitting a formal letter to the Open Space Committee asking that the Chautauqua projects in the 2009 Open

Space plan remain listed in the plan. The Conservancy would also like the plan to call for the conservation and enhancement of the county's lakes, shore lands, tributary stream corridors, watershed wetlands and watershed forests. Of special concern are Chautauqua Lake, Bear Lake, Cassadaga Lake, Lake Erie and their tributaries, as well as efforts to support trout and steelhead populations.

- Is there a way that the NYS Open Space Plan can provide funding or support for conservation easements or more strict regulation in flooding events?
- The Foundation for Sustainable Forests would like to emphasize the importance of Bear Lake as an important biological reserve and importance of the preservation of working forest land that surrounds the lake. A formal letter is being submitted to the RAC committee.
- Is there a way that the Open Plan can include language about removal of dams in spawning areas as a way to ensure connectivity routes for important fish species?
- Through the NYS Open Space Plan, how is the state looking to expand legacy forestland and stop forest fragmentation?
- Did the Allegany Plateau get included in the National Forest Legacy Registry? It needs to be legacy designated if it is not already. There needs to be a balance between protection and wise use, perhaps the legacy designation could be a tool to achieve this?
- I think the NYS Open Space Plan should address Invasive Species issues if possible.

NY Open Space Conservation Public Meeting
Erie County
Woodlawn Beach State Park
March 26, 2013
7:00 PM

In attendance: (approximately 20)

7 Open Space Committee members

~12 public (6 representing Equestrian groups – NYS Horse Council, WNY Equine Network, remaining representing Riverkeeper, WNY Land Conservancy, Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, NYS Parks)

Meeting Summary:

Tom Hersey opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, gave a brief overview of the meeting's purpose.

Paul McKeon introduced Regional Advisory Committee members in attendance and proceeded through a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Overview of the current plan
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Regional Advisory Committee
- Opportunities for public input and involvement

Tom Hersey explained that a priority for Erie County Department of Environment and Planning is to try to find ways to address failing infrastructure using green technology. His Department is working in partnership with the Riverkeeper on water quality improvements such as sediment reduction, specifically related to the Buffalo Sewer Authority's infrastructure. He also mentioned that DEP has some county initiatives related to community gardens and urban greenspace that could potentially tie into the Open Space Plan's emphasis on Environmental Justice.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to public input.

Public Input/Discussion – Summary of Comments and Questions:

- The Open Space Plan revisions should emphasize the importance of ecological corridors, especially in light of climate change. This should be considered as one of the regional priorities.
- The Lake Erie Watershed should be added as a regional project priority, emphasizing efforts between Erie, Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties to address and reduce pollutant loads. It would be helpful if the Open Space Plan could support protection of this watershed, perhaps through the development of a plan that identifies and works to address sources of pollution.
- Susannah Barton, Executive Director for Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, thanked the committee for their work on the Open Space Plan, and explained that the plan has been very helpful to their organization in obtaining grant funds. Their group would like to see Environmental Justice included as a topic in the Regional Conservation Priority Projects List, specifically on page 39, "Connecting NY with Nature." Currently, their group leases 80 parcels from the City of Buffalo for community garden projects. Their group is trying to purchase these parcels instead of just leasing them, in order to ensure long term protection of the

- projects they have worked hard to initiate and establish on these parcels. Community gardens are mentioned in the 2009 Open Space Plan, but this group would love to see some stronger language added about community gardens and would like to see it added to the Priority Conservation list. They may also be sending a formal letter about this to the committee. (Not yet received.)
- Pete Tarnawskyj, representing the Wales Assessment Office and also the Western Chapter of the NYS Horse Council, expressed concern regarding prevention of urban sprawl and land conservation at the local level. Currently, he explained that there is no way to lower property assessments for horse owners that are not commercial land owners. Due to steep taxes, landowners that privately own large parcels of land end up having to sell and these properties then often become subdivided, resulting in loss of open space. There doesn't seem to be any provision/incentive for protecting privately owned open space. He is wondering if there is an equalization mechanism for private landowners (specifically horse owners) who own 10 or more acres of land to apply for and receive a tax assessment break (similar to the agricultural assessment process currently available to farmers). Currently, private landowners protecting open space are penalized by high taxes, not rewarded. He is submitting a written letter to the RAC committee summarizing his comments.
 - Bob Pfohl of the WNY Horse Council read a letter emphasizing the council's request for the Open Space Plan to address trail and open space areas for equestrian use. The NYS Horse Council would like the NYS Open Space plan to include the importance of maintaining trails and open spaces for recreational horseback riding. His group is working cooperatively with DEC and NYS Parks to help maintain existing multi-use trails, both through volunteer labor and by obtaining grant funds. Our group would like to see consideration for horses and places for recreational horseback riding emphasized in the NYS Open Space Plan wherever possible. He will submit a formal letter to the RAC Committee.
 - Katherine Winkler, who coordinates the Remedial Action Plan for the Buffalo River for the Riverkeeper, asked that the Buffalo River be included as a priority in the Open Space Plan. Currently, there is very limited access to the water and their group would like to establish greater public access to the resource so that people can enjoy it. This could possibly be considered in the Environmental Justice section of the plan, since the Buffalo River runs through urban Environmental Justice areas. Riverkeeper would like to see habitat conservation emphasized in the plan for the entire Niagara River Watershed. She will submit a formal letter to the RAC committee summarizing the Riverkeeper's comments.

- Kathleen McCormick of the WNY Land Conservancy asked if there will be a focus on preserving farmland in the NYS Open Space Plan. It should be included under statewide objectives.

NY Open Space Conservation Public Meeting
Allegany County
Crossroads Commerce and Conference Center
Belmont, NY
April 10, 2013
7:00 PM

In attendance: (approximately 40)

- 7 Open Space Committee members
- ~ 35 public - Majority of public representing either equestrian groups (Allegany County Saddle Dusters Horse Club, BLTN Horse Club, Horse Care Assurance Program, 4H) or the Allegany County Planning Board. 1 from Genesee River Wilds, 1 from Cattaraugus County Local Development Corp.
- 1 Representative from Senator Catherine Young's office

Meeting Summary:

Kier Dirlam opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, gave a brief overview of the meeting's purpose and introduced Regional Advisory Committee members in attendance.

Paul McKeown gave a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Overview of the current plan
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Regional Advisory Committee
- Opportunities for public input and involvement

Rock Termini also gave a presentation that described:

- Open Space plan process and history
- County appointments
- Role of Regional Advisory Committee members
- Committee's goals
- Reasons for updating and maintaining the Open Space Plan

The next portion of the meeting was devoted to public input and discussion.

Public Input/Discussion – Summary of Comments and Questions:

- Question: Can you give any clarification about state land ownership of Alma Pond? Does DEC own the dam or is that owned by the Rod and Gun Club? Jeff Nytra explained that DEC owns the access partially around the pond but not the dam itself. The area is managed for recreational fishing.
- Would like to see state ownership of the entire Alma Pond area, not just limited to current access areas.
- On Allen Lake, why is it open to fishing only access but not equestrian access? There should be equal emphasis provided to equestrian opportunities. Currently, in the Phelps Creek area, equestrian provisions there are dilapidated and need attention.
- Question: Why were riders shut out of DEC state lands years back when all the roads closed? (DEC representatives explained budget issues and related road maintenance issues that required closure to all groups)
- The Open Space plan should ensure that recreational areas and acquisitions obtained are equally as accessible to horses as they are to other groups.
- Horse riders in Allegany County would like to see more horse trails that provide safety to riders and access to water for horses.
- The Open Space plan should enable more multiuse trails in Allegany that are open to horses. There should be development of a major horse trail in Allegany County that connects existing trails. A connection from the Finger Lakes trail, to Phillips Creek, to Alder area would be helpful, along with a covered bridge that would help connect access to southern areas.
- There hasn't been any new horse trail development in Allegany County in years. Riders here need help keeping existing trails open. Trails should be equipped to be multi-use to include hikers, bikers, equestrians, sporting clubs and snowmobiles. We need cooperation between all trail user groups.
- Question: In other counties, have you seen multiple use trail users to be in conflict with each other? (Patrick McGlew explained that multiuse trails are effective if users are cautious and suggested contacting Chautauqua County since they have had success with multi-use trails).
- Discussion about riding and horse trails at Letchworth State Park. NYS OPRHP provided explanation.

- In terms of open space areas in general, there seems to be unequal emphasis on other sports and not enough on emphasis on horseback riding opportunities.
- Horse riders in Allegany County would like to see more horse-friendly infrastructure on trails on public lands in this county.
- There seems to be incompatibility with horses for existing trails. For example, certain trails in Phillips Creek are selectively used only. It's okay for snowmobiles to use, but not for other users. We need to establish compatible trail usage. Perhaps just could be as simple as putting up signs to look out and be aware of horses.
- Phillips Creek is one of the best areas for horse use. Structures there need improving. We need more places like this one.
- There are 60,000 acres of public land in our county. Trails need to be installed with the intent of multiple use activities, currently there are too many exclusive use trails.
- I think there would be adequate horse rider volunteers to help maintain trails if additional trails were made available.
- Brad Whitcomb of NYS OPRHP gave a brief update of horse riding trails in Allegany State Park and volunteer activity there.
- Question: How can private landowner make their property available to public use without incurring additional liability? Does the Open Space plan have a way to address this? Pat McGlew explained the General Liabilities Law.
- If there is a way that the Open Space plan could help protect private landowners who offer use of their land for trail connectivity, that would be something that should be considered a priority.
- Allegany County spent many years working on the Wellsville Addison right of way between the Genesee River and Pennsylvania. The area was preserved and the intent was to turn it over to the state. Currently, The WAG trail area center sections have erosion and structural issues. We would like to see that part opened and restored. That area is also part of the Triple Divide and critical trail corridor; we would like to see more work occurring there. This area should be identified and addressed more specifically in the NYS Open Space plan, especially with the potential it offers for multiuse trails.

The question/comment portion of the meeting concluded. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to presentations related to Open Space projects.

Presentations:

Kier Dirlam gave a presentation and update on the Genesee River Wilds Project. Extensive information about this project is available online at <http://www.geneseeiverwilds.org> .

The project's goal is to create a forested conservation corridor along the upper Genesee River and selected tributaries reaching approximately 70 miles from the river's sources in Pennsylvania to the southern boundary of Letchworth State Park in New York State. Information about the Genesee River Wilds Triple Divide Greenway and trail system and goals is available at http://www.geneseeiverwilds.org/wp/?page_id=417.

The coalition works collaboratively with federal, state, county, municipal, non profit groups, landowners, farmers and various recreational groups to improve the health of the upper Genesee River and its watershed; protect them from future environmental threats; and enhance their recreational potential.

Currently, there is ongoing work to create 3 river access points on the Genesee River in Allegany County. One has already been constructed and includes a kiosk, parking area, and access to the river. Kier also reviewed the trail system and the need to connect Belfast to Wellsville through the Greenway and WAG trail. In addition, there are some serious erosion issues; additional work is needed to improve the ecological standing of the river.

Rick LeFeber of the Cattaraugus County Local Development Corporation gave a brief description of the Pat McGee Trail, which is a privately owned property that is open to the public. The trail runs 13 miles and includes multiuse trails and a nature sanctuary. Rick suggested that Allegany County look at establishing a greenway that connects existing trails, similar to what has been done in Chautauqua County. There needs to be an emphasis on connecting greenways first within the county, then between counties, then within the region, in hopes of one day connecting Lake Ontario to Allegany State Park to the national Forest trough a trail system. That could have the potential to be the greatest greenway in NYS.

Rick suggested that the NYS Open Space plan place special emphasis on developing and supporting hubs and linkages in trail systems. He submitted a formal written comment for the RAC Committee summarizing his comments.

Rock Termini concluded the meeting with a presentation on farmland and forest preservation that highlighted:

- Conservation easements as a tool for open space preservation
- Review of Open space goals and how that aligns well with farmland protection
- Need to emphasize broad conservation easements
- Need to consider making trails accessible to persons with handicaps as well.

NY Open Space Conservation Public Meeting
Cattaraugus County
Cattaraugus County Center
Little Valley, NY
April 18, 2013
7:00 PM

In attendance: (approximately 15)

- 10 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee members
- ~ 5 public - 1 from WNY Horse Council, 1 from Cattaraugus County Farmland Protection, remainder from Cattaraugus County Planning Dept.

Meeting Summary:

Rock Termini opened the meeting and introduced Regional Advisory Committee members in attendance. He gave a brief presentation that described:

- Open Space plan process and history
- County appointments
- Role of Regional Advisory Committee members
- Committee's goals
- Reasons for updating and maintaining the Open Space Plan

Paul McKeown gave a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Overview of the current plan - categories used in previous years
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Regional Advisory Committee
- Opportunities for public input and involvement

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to public input and discussion.

Public Input/Discussion – Summary of Comments and Questions:

- Question: Who provides oversight to DEC on operations in general? Who sets DEC's policies? Who provides oversight to DEC on land acquisitions? Is there

- oversight by the state legislature? Paul McKeown and Jeff Nytrai addressed these questions. Chuck Godfrey also provided some examples of DEC's state lands acquisitions work and gave examples of DEC response to public input regarding state lands.
- The Cattaraugus County Legislature is concerned with the rejuvenation of the economy in this area. Some industry has left the area, citing high taxes and over environmental regulation as a reason. Is there a way the Open Space plan can help combine economic success with protection the environment? Mark Thomas, Chuck Godfrey and Rock Termini provided examples of how open space areas can be helpful economic divers, especially snowmobile trails.
 - Cattaraugus County could benefit from some multiuse trails open year round as an economic driver.
 - There are some very large equestrian groups represented in Cattaraugus County. If the Open Space plan could provide room to grow equestrian trials in existing systems and tie into other trail systems, that would be helpful.
 - Some discussion followed on general liability law and how it relates to private land owners. It would be helpful if there was a way that the Open Space Plan could be supportive and help protect private landowners willing to let pieces of their land be used as public trails.
 - Question: Could campgrounds be included in the Open Space Plan? DEC and Parks representatives explained site maintenance and cleanup considerations that would need to be taken into account.
 - Dave Paradowski discussed trail systems though state lands and the Adopt a Natural Resource agreement. While sometimes there are conflicts between trail users, DEC works closely with recreational groups and volunteers to set trails. There are about 20 different groups in Region 9 that have trail agreements on DEC state lands. Camping is allowed on state lands if it is from 150 feet from the road or water. Some designated campgrounds allow camping closer to the road, however those require extensive maintenance and upkeep.
 - Brad Whitcomb reported that OPRHP has seen increased trail use on their lands, especially by mountain bikers.
 - Question: Is there a way for horse riders to start a registration fee (similar to what snowmobile clubs do) that could help provide funding for trail maintenance?

- Question: Is there a way for the Open Space plan to provide a component for education about open space goals?
- Question: Do brownfields fit into the Open Space Plan at all? Paul McKeown explained that DEC has separate programs through DEC's Division of Environmental Remediation to address brownfield cleanup sites.
- How does the open space plan fit into climate change? RAC committee members described how the acquisition of areas such as those adjacent to flooding zones, wildlife corridors, critical habitat areas or forest areas that serve as buffers could be considered methods of addressing climate change through the open space plan.
- Dave Paradowski reported that the Cattaraugus County Unit Management Plan (covering 30,000 acres) is being compiled and a draft should be available for public input next year.

NY Open Space Conservation Public Meeting
Wyoming County
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wyoming County
Warsaw, NY
April 25, 2013
7:00 PM

In attendance: (8 total)

- 6 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee members
- 2 public – both horseback riders associated with the WNY Horse Council

Meeting Summary:

Paul McKeown opened the meeting and introduced Regional Advisory Committee members in attendance. He gave a PowerPoint presentation that described:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Overview of the current plan – categories used in previous years
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Regional Advisory Committee
- Opportunities for public input and involvement

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to public input and discussion.

Public Input/Discussion – Summary of Comments and Questions:

- Kier Dirlam noted that the Lake Erie Tributary gorges appear on the list of Region 9 Priority Conservation Projects in the 2009 NYS Open Space Plan. What about Lake Ontario gorges, perhaps it would be worth considering adding language in the plan to include?
- Paul McKeown suggested that the committee may want to consider adding language to the plan regarding Great Lakes Embayments.
- Kier Dirlam explained how the Genesee Valley Greenway relates to Wyoming County and suggested that the Genesee River be added to the Open Space Plan in sections specific to Wyoming County.
- Richard Parker of OPRHP suggested that since the Niagara Escarpment stretches across the state, it should possibly be included as a multi region project in the Open Space Plan. There is a 50 acre unique area along the escarpment owned by DEC.
- Some discussion followed on how much land is usually considered acceptable for acquisition. What about parcels that are less than 10 acres, are those ever considered in the Open Space Plan? Paul McKeown explained that normally larger parcels are considered so that they can be optimized for public use purposes, however sometimes smaller parcels are purchased if a willing seller exists and the parcels are in a strategic location, such as adjacent to a public land. For instance, DEC has purchased some isolated parcels along Zoar Valley in the past.
- Discussion followed regarding the reasons that are there more state lands that exist in the southern sections of Region 9 compared to the northern sections of the region.
- Who maintains the horse trails at Carlton Hill? Equestrian trail users have noticed maintenance issues with the parking area and are wondering if improvements can be made. Horse users would also like to see more room in that parking lot area for trucks and trailers; currently the space is inadequate for horse riders using the area.
- Kier Dirlam explained that at the recent Allegany County Open Space meeting, there was significant discussion on broadening trail use on state lands and

making it available to more users, specifically equestrians. It appears the same interest exists in Wyoming County as well.

- Richard Park offered an update of the horse trails available at Letchworth State Park.
- Is there room for any other acquisitions around Silver Lake? Paul McKeown explained that there was a stretch of woods being considered for ice fishing acquisitions, but that acquisitions in that area can be difficult if selling to the state is not supported by the Lake's Association group. DEC may be considering lands in that area again if the Association is interested.
- Richard Parker suggested that Wyoming County consider connecting with the Finger Lakes Trail group which might be interested in helping to find acquisitions related to enhancing Finger Lake trail opportunities. Portions of the Finger Lakes Trail extend into lower areas of the region, some in Wyoming County near Route 19 south of Orangeville. Partnering with the Finger Lakes Trail group could potentially help with providing collaborative funding opportunities for land acquisitions in that area.
- Discussion about the meaning of Environmental Justice followed and how it is currently addressed in the Open Space Plan.
- Richard Parker asked if there would be a way the Open Space plan could support shoreline protection along the Great Lakes using green materials (as opposed to traditional bank armoring). Perhaps an emphasis on creating vegetative shorelines could be included in this round of edits.
- John Copeland suggested looking into abandoned Railroad property in Wyoming County for acquisition as part of a trail system.
- Could the NYS Open Space Plan possibly address support for combating invasive species in areas and watersheds where critical habitat is identified? Would having it referenced in the plan possibly be helpful to groups applying for grant funds to address various invasive species threats to waterways, forests, etc?

NY Open Space Conservation Public Meeting
Niagara County
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
Lockport, NY
May 1, 2013

7:00 PM

In attendance: (About 15 total)

- 9 Regional Open Space Advisory Committee members
- 1 Representative from the Niagara County Legislature
- 1 Representative for Senator Maziarz
- 1 Media (Lockport Union Sun & Journal)
- 3 public - 2 horseback riders associated with the WNY Horse Council and NYS Trails Council, 1 farming)

Meeting Summary:

Paul McKeown opened the meeting and introduced Regional Advisory Committee members in attendance. He gave a PowerPoint presentation that described:

- Principles, goals and history of New York State's Open Space Plan
- Overview of the current plan – categories used in previous years
- Regional acquisitions for each county in Region 9
- Regional Advisory Committee
- Opportunities for public input and involvement

Nancy Smith gave a presentation on the WNY Land Conservancy's work in Niagara County, specifically on the Niagara Legacy Escarpment. The Land Conservancy was awarded a grant from the Niagara Greenway Commission and is working cooperatively with community stakeholders and technical assistance from Ecology and Environment to develop a plan to address this important ecological area.

Goals include:

- Completing an inventory of the ecological, geological, scenic, and cultural resources of the Niagara County portion of the Niagara Escarpment.
- Identifying areas of natural heritage significance along the escarpment and recommending ways to preserve and enhance these resources,
- Identifying priority restoration projects and providing conservation recommendations.

So far, visits have been conducted to 20 different sites and 2 public meetings have been held. The group is aiming to have draft of strategic plan available this fall. Additional information on this project is available on WNY Land Conservancy's website at <http://www.wnylc.org/Escarpment.html> .

Nancy suggested that the Niagara Escarpment, Niagara River and Lake Ontario Shoreline be included in the NYS Open Space Plan as a priority conservation project. Paul McKeown explained that the escarpment may already be referenced under a multi-region category as well that includes regions 7–9.

Rock Termini also gave a presentation that described:

- Open Space plan process and history
- County appointments
- Role of Regional Advisory Committee members
- Committee's goals
- Reasons for updating and maintaining the Open Space Plan

Rock also emphasized the importance of conservation easement purchases that can be used to help reach open space goals without requiring the state to acquire additional lands and helping to keep land on local tax rolls.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to public input and discussion.

Public Input/Discussion – Summary of Comments and Questions:

- John Armstrong of the Niagara County Legislature suggested that the Keggs Creek area be considered for open space projects. There are enhanced tributaries in that area and great birding opportunities. There might be interest in partnering to complete dredging along the shoreline.
- Question: In general, how do acquisitions work? Does it affect private property owners negatively? Discussion ensued on the acquisition process. Acquisitions only made when there is a willing seller and buyer.
- Question: What is Environmental Justice and how is that part of the Open Space Plan? How does climate change fit into the Open Space Plan? Rock Termini and Pat McGlew gave examples of past environmental justice projects included in the Open Space plan. In addition to acquiring public space in rural areas where land is available, also need to consider how to provide open space in urban areas.
- Carol Schmelz of the NYS Trails Council explained her involvement with trying to get more equestrian trails established in Niagara County over the years. She currently has to travel to other counties in order to ride, and would like to see land opened up to horse trails in Niagara County. She explained that there are many snowmobile trails in Niagara County, but no horse trails. Despite her efforts, she has not been able to be successful in expanding horse trail riding

opportunities. It may be that the lack of availability of public land in Niagara County is the largest problem in achieving this.

- RAC members suggested that there be an emphasis on multiple use trails and that groups benefiting from multiple use trails convene and work together. Similar efforts bringing groups together have worked well in other counties that were interested in developing multiple use trails.
- Chris Schotz suggested that possibly the Tennessee Oil and Gas pipeline could be a potential opportunity for trails.
- Chuck Godfrey asked if the Tonawanda Wildlife Management area could be a possible area to consider putting horse trails. Carol Schmelz explained that there are too many equestrian hazards in that area (geese, muskrat holes, etc.).
- Chuck Godfrey suggested that the Niagara River shoreline and tributaries for Regions 6–9 be included in the NYS Open Space plan as part of the Great lakes Shoreline – see on page 90 of current plan, look into revising that section during update.
- OPRHP suggested that complaints received regarding parks in Niagara County relate to lack of trails, low water levels and lack of dredging, and asked if the Open Space Plan might be able to address this under the category of state land stewardship.
- Discussion between the group followed on how broad to make Open Space Plan regional categories – are they currently too broad that they do not help groups as intended to? Are they not broad enough? How can the committee be sensitive to that concern, for example specifically with the Buffalo River Watershed “Area of Concern.” Perhaps the use of very specific language regarding the categories, such as “establish buffer strips, etc” could help narrow goals and identify concerns more specifically and in a way that would better help groups and make the plan less overly broad. Another suggestion was to consider adding more specific areas as bullets under the 2009 Plan’s existing headings.