



# Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy

# ViewPoints

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## Spitzer's First Budget Boosts Local Land Preservation

State investments in the environment will increase under Gov. Eliot Spitzer's first budget proposal, and the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy stands to benefit. Taking a message of support for the plan to members of the state legislature, MHLC sent a four-person delegation to the Northeast Land Trust Alliance's annual state capitol lobby day. Executive Director Jill Knapp and staff member Helen Smith were joined by board members Jeff Leon and Jeff Jones for a day of meetings with area representatives.

Highlighting Governor Spitzer's budget is a proposed increase in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$250 million. Under the Governor's plan, many of the traditional EPF categories are slated to increase. Spending for farmland preservation will grow to \$28 million, while funding for open space will increase to \$58 million (\$8 million more than the current state budget). Within that category, money available to local land trusts through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program will double to \$1 million. It was a generous grant through the Partnership Program, which is administered by the Land Trust Alliance, that allowed MHLC to raise the funds needed to hire Executive Director Knapp and to take other important steps toward a more mature and self-sufficient organization.

Key to the Governor's environmental spending plan is increased revenue that will be generated by expanding the Bottle Bill, New York's returnable beverage container law, to include bottled water and non-carbonated drinks such as Snapple. First approved in 1982, the nickel deposit law has been the state's most important and effective waste reduction measure. The program will not only expand under the new Spitzer plan, but unclaimed nickels will be collected and used to fund the increases in the EPF. Estimated at more than \$100 million annually, the dedicated nickels program should help the EPF grow to around \$350 million in next year's budget.

Legislation to expand the bottle law has twice passed the state Assembly, where it was sponsored by former Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Tom

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## An Outstanding Volunteer

It takes many people with many different skills to help the MHLC preserve valuable land for future generations. We're fortunate to have **Hank Stebbins** use his land protection experience and time to negotiate conservation agreements with landowners in Schenectady County.

Hank worked closely with Dudley Crauer and Calvin Schmidt, two long-time landowners in Glenville, to complete conservation agreements on 141 acres of land.



Hank Stebbins  
photo by Dan Driscoll

The agreements provide assurance that the unique natural and historic value of the properties in Wolf Hollow and along Hoffmans Fault will be permanently protected from development.

Hank's experience includes working for Scenic Hudson for 9 years – exclusively on acquiring farm easements; working for the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for 15 years on farmland retention programs, and for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Hank is now officially retired and volunteers for the Glenville Open Space Committee, as well as the MHLC. He has always enjoyed beautiful landscapes and working with people who want to protect their lands. He is currently talking with several additional land owners in Glenville about easements.

In addition to his volunteer work, Hank is a "neat dad and wonderful husband." He is becoming an avid birder, and considers the sighting of a female Cerulean Warbler an

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## President's Message



What could bring more than 50 people out to the old Montgomery County court house in Fonda on a slippery and snowy night in February? They came to hear Dr. John Davis present trends and opportunities for the County's future, using his analysis of geographic data. Questions and opinions flew back and forth as the audience jumped into a spirited discussion of his points. It was clear that participants cared deeply about the future of their community: quality of life, economic opportunity, open space and environmental protection.

At meetings in Bethlehem, my neighbors have been just as engaged in talking about the future direction of our town. From the Hilltowns to the Mohawk River, similar discussions are taking place in numerous government and civic settings. Where will our children and their children live, work and play? How can we build healthy communities and protect the treasured landscapes and natural areas that define our region?

The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy is part of the answer to these complex questions. That's why I joined more than a decade ago and got involved as a volunteer board member in 2001. In addition to our hands-on work of voluntary land protection -- our goal is to protect another 1,000 acres by 2010-- the Conservancy is working to increase public commitment to land conservation in our region. By co-sponsoring events like the one in Fonda and participating in other civic meetings, we're building awareness of the need to save natural areas and working farms as part of planning for the future.

As the new Board President, I invite you to join in! Please consider increasing the amount of your annual membership contribution or making an additional gift. Help us get the word out about the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy by hosting an informal gathering for your friends and neighbors or by planning public information and fundraising activities. Once the snow melts, we'll be looking for volunteers to help with work days and outings at our preserves. Let us know at [mhlc@mohawkhudson.com](mailto:mhlc@mohawkhudson.com) or 436-6346 how you'd like to participate. Help shape our region's future!

Peggy Sherman

## Board News

At its January meeting the Board of Directors elected new officers and two new members. Former Treasurer and Chair of the Membership and Development Committee, Peggy Sherman, has been elected President of the Board. Anne Reynolds begins as our new Secretary. Jeff Jones continues as Vice President and Jeff Leon as Treasurer. In addition, the Board elected to its membership David Barnet and Judy Thomson.

Leaving the board after 6 years is Lois Porter. Lois and her husband Don have been founders and stewards of our Ashford Glen Preserve. She has promised to continue her excellent work with the Land Preservation and Stewardship Committee. We appreciate her important contributions to the work of the Conservancy.



Dan Driscoll

While former president Dan Driscoll will remain on the Board, the end of his term as President gives us an opportunity to thank him for the many things he has done for this organization.

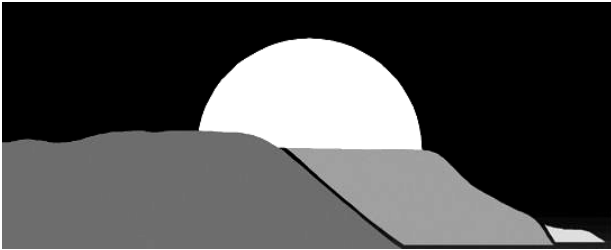
Dan was a founding member of the Conservancy in 1992 and has been a board member all but one year since. More than any other single person he is responsible for MHLC's continuation, growth, and increasing effectiveness. He is a man of many talents and boundless energy and has placed all at the service of the conservancy, from negotiating conservation agreements to building our first website or placing boundary markers for our preserves. We thank him.

## Spitzer's Budget...

DiNapoli. Unfortunately, the measure has always failed in the Senate due to opposition from Majority Leader Joe Bruno. But it is sponsored by Long Island Republican Kenneth LaValle, and a growing number of Republican Senators have indicated they are ready to support the proposal as part of a negotiated spending plan.

Other environmental highlights in Spitzer's first budget include funds to increase staffing levels at the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation where MHLC member Carol Ash has been named commissioner, and the Adirondack Park Agency. The state Department of Environmental Conservation is also slated for staff increases, including 12 positions at a new unit that will be dedicated to reducing the emissions of greenhouse gasses that cause global warming.

Jeff Jones



## New Strategic Plan Adopted

After thought and debate, and many drafts, the Board has adopted a Strategic Plan for the years 2007-2010. The Plan is meant to fulfill the objectives of the Vision and Mission Statements adopted at the same meeting.

### Vision Statement:

Our legacy in the Mohawk Hudson region will be many protected special places of recreational, scenic, natural, cultural, and agricultural value which the communities of the area will be inspired to respect, care for and enjoy.

### Mission Statement:

The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy saves special places by promoting the voluntary conservation of farmland, cultural and natural landscapes in cooperation with landowners, local governments and other partners for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.

You can view the Strategic Plan in more detail at [www.mohawkhudson.org/Library/StratPlan.htm](http://www.mohawkhudson.org/Library/StratPlan.htm).

## Outstanding Volunteer...

exciting highlight. Last spring, he took a train trip across the country, traveling through Lamar, Colorado; Garden City, Kansas; and New Mexico, ending up in California. While the journey was enjoyable, Hank returned with a renewed appreciation for New York State scenery.

Hank works out of his "office" in the cellar of his 150 year old farm house. This cramped space consists of stone walls, timbers as floor joists and various pictures and cobwebs for decorations.

We appreciate Hank's knowledge, skills, commitment and time in saving special places for our grandchildren.

If you would like to consider a conservation agreement for your property, see ViewPoints, October 2006, at [www.mohawkhudson.org/pubs.htm](http://www.mohawkhudson.org/pubs.htm). If you would like to volunteer to build trails, erect kiosks, or assist the MHLC in other ways, please contact us at 518-436-6346 or [mhlc@nycap.rr.com](mailto:mhlc@nycap.rr.com).

Judy Thomson

## Schiffendecker Farm Preserve

On February 15<sup>th</sup> we acquired the Schiffendecker Farm Preserve. This 39-acre property is located in the Town of Bethlehem between Old Kenwood Road and Bender Lane. The Conservancy received the property as part of a wetland mitigation agreement between the Nigro Company, the Army Corp of Engineers and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Named after a family that farmed the land in the 1800s, the property offers vestiges of its agricultural past. Remnants of farm roads and an orchard can be found among the wooded hills and ravines. Where cows may have pastured, today beaver activity is evident. Thanks to the beavers, a large wetland has been created from the damming of a small stream that runs through the property, before emptying into the Normanskill. Undergrowth, steep slopes, and small stream channels currently make access challenging, but extremely interesting.

The Conservancy will be developing a management plan for the property, which will eventually include public trails. If you would like to preview our newest preserve before we develop trails, we will be holding an outing on May 5. Wear your boots; bring your pruners; be prepared for a rugged outing.

Jill Knapp

## Consider including The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy in your will or trust

You can provide now for a future gift to the Conservancy by including a bequest provision in your will or revocable trust.

Bequests have several advantages:

Your assets remain in your control during your lifetime.

You can modify your bequest if your circumstances change.

There is no upper limit on the estate tax deductions that can be taken for charitable bequests.

You know that your gift will benefit the conservancy tomorrow just as you intend it to today.

Bequests should be designated to the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, PO Box 567, Slingerlands NY 12159



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**CONSERVANCY**  
*Saving Special Places*

Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy  
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## Coming Events

### **Earth Day Celebrations**

**April 21, 11-3** — New York State Museum.

**April 21, 11-5:15** — Honest Weight Coop, 484 Central Ave, Albany. MHLC presentation at 4:30.

**April 22, 12-4** — ECOS Earth Day Celebration at the Mabee Farm Historical Site, Rotterdam Junction.

### **April 28 – Kiosk Building for Bethlehem Preserves**

Volunteers needed! Call for details.

### **May 5, 1:00 PM -- Hike for the Hearty**

Explore our new Schiffendecker Farm Preserve. Call for more information.

### **May 6, 12:00 -4:00 PM – Albany History Fair**

Visit our display at the fair. Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center, Quackenbush Square at the corner of Clinton and Broadway in downtown Albany.

### **May 16 — Annual Meeting**

Join us for our Annual Meeting and dinner at the Stockade Inn in Schenectady. Our guest speaker will be Carol Ash, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Watch for your invitation or call 436-6346 for reservations.

### **May 20, 8AM — Birds and Bagels**

Expert birdwatcher Frank Murphy will lead this Rensselaerville outing. Call Helene Goldberger at 797-3139

### **June 2, 2-4 PM -- Hike with Your Hound.**

Bring your family and your dog for a leisurely afternoon stroll at our Phillipinkill Preserve.

### **September 23 – Our Annual Country Gala**

Save the date for this festive event, to be held on the beautiful grounds of the historic Pruyn House in Colonie.