

The Responsibilities of Stewardship

Protecting important natural, scenic, agricultural, and cultural landscapes is our mission, so acquiring preserves and concluding conservation agreements make the news and mark our progress. But they also add to the Conservancy's ongoing administrative, maintenance, and financial responsibilities.

MHLC considers relations with the neighbors of each preserve to be critical. A neighborhood committee provides important input into development of a management plan which will detail how we will protect those features—wetlands, stream corridors, habitat, views, etc.—that make the property worth protecting to begin with.

Boundary markers must be placed, and if the property is to be open to the public, information kiosks, parking areas, and trails must be planned and constructed. All of these must then be maintained and updated using the professional, volunteer, and financial assets of the Conservancy.



Wolf Creek Falls Preserve

Dan Driscoll

In addition, preserve ownership and conservation agreements mean continuing legal, insurance, and administrative costs. To ensure its ability to meet the future financial burdens the Conservancy establishes an endowment fund for each property. These endowments constitute a major part of the Conservancy's financial burdens and are an important reason why fund-raising success is vital.

Conservation agreements, sometimes referred to as "easements", allow the Conservancy to protect land in perpetuity without actually owning it, but involve different, and in some ways more complex responsibilities.

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Parks Commissioner Carol Ash Keynotes Annual Meeting

Carol Ash, newly-confirmed Commissioner of the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, delivered the keynote address at this year's annual meeting of the Conservancy, where she was honored with MHLC's "Saving Special Places" award, in recognition of work in the land conservation community.



Conservancy President Peggy Sherman presents the "Saving Special Places" Award to keynoter Carol Ash

In her new role, Commissioner Ash has gained a first-hand look at the condition of New York's remarkable system of state parks, which welcome over 60 million visitors each year. Noting that under her predecessor, more than 25 new parks had been acquired, Ash said that her vision for the future will emphasize infrastructure improvements and making the experience more relevant to today's environmentally-conscious New Yorker. Ash pointed to the report released last fall by Parks & Trails New York, a watchdog group, that sited a backlog of over \$300 million in capital costs that are needed just to stabilize the current system. She expressed hope that passage of an expanded bottle bill by the state Legislature, along with a growing Environmental Protection Fund, would help provide the needed

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Peggy Sherman

President's Message

Endless Summers

Summer in the Northeast is a rare and wonderful time. For me, the long days at the end of June still evoke a sense of anticipation and freedom, even though I spend most of the summer in an office.

Summer is also a time of family reunions, and the traditions of how we spend time together, outdoors, connect families across the generations. I remember playing in the surf at Jones Beach while grandparents and parents kept watch...scrambling down the banks of the creek behind my grandparents' house with my cousins...and sailing on Lake Ontario with my family.

I hope that my children's outdoor memories are just as vivid, especially now that they are adult urban dwellers. They spent time outdoors with four generations of their family, hiking at Five Rivers and along the Indian Ladder trail, fishing in Lake Winnepesaukee, and camping in the Adirondacks.

Discerning readers will note the absence of Conservancy properties on this list. The Conservancy was in its infancy, and we did not know about the Holt and Winn preserves. If I ever have grandchildren, I will make sure that their memories include hiking in our woods and playing by our streams! If you are looking for outdoor activities with your children or grandchildren, I hope you will call 436-6346 and ask for our brochure *Hike With Us Through Special Places*.

I'm grateful for the summer places that brought generations of my family together in the outdoors. It takes a dedicated landowner to make sure that a special place will endure for future generations. Just like our homes, our parks and preserves need regular and ongoing maintenance and management by their public and non-profit owners.

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll read about all the activities that go into the Conservancy's acquisition of a new preserve. To make a lasting difference in the landscape of the greater Capital Region, we're working to make sure that the Conservancy has the people, policies, and capacity to be a responsible landowner and steward for years to come.

And remember that creek behind my grandparents' house? I'm very proud that my grandmother gave the land around the creek to the town of Danville, Indiana for a nature preserve. If you are thinking about creating your own legacy of land for future summer memories, please call Jill Knapp at 436-6346.

Save the date

Sunday September 23, 2007, 1 to 4 PM

Gala Luncheon and Silent Auction

To Benefit the Conservancy

**At the historic Pruyn House
in the Town of Colonie**

Details and Invitation to follow

**For more information, or to make a
donation to the silent auction, call 436-6346**

Stewardship (cont)

We must maintain an ongoing relationship with current and successor landowners, and monitor the property to make sure the terms of the agreement are respected.

The wording of conservation agreements can be complicated. Landowners may retain certain rights, but may be required to give notice to or seek permission from the Conservancy. For example, property owners may retain the right to harvest a woodland, but may be required to submit a forest management plan for the Conservancy's approval. Maintaining good relations with landowners is of great help, but defending and enforcing terms of an agreement "in perpetuity" is a significant responsibility that again places heavy burdens on our volunteers and professional staff and may involve significant legal expenses.

Key to the Conservancy's success in meeting the responsibilities that result from owning preserves and holding conservation agreements is the establishment of an endowment for each property. Based on current practice in the land trust community, we have determined that the endowment for each property and agreement must be approximately twenty-five thousand dollars. Raising these funds normally involves the support of the land donor or owner. Any additional amounts needed are made up from other sources, including MHLC's fund-raising.

— Rodger Fink



Meeting (cont)

capital investment funds. She also plans to work to ensure that the agency's policies and initiatives can serve as a model to address global warming.

"Open Space Preservation Leadership Awards" were presented to honor the outstanding and longstanding volunteer efforts of Hank Stebbins (featured in our last issue) and the long and effective service of Lois Porter as Board Member and co-chair of the Land Preservation and Stewardship Committee. In addition, the Board paid tribute to past President Dan Driscoll for invaluable contributions of time and energy to the Conservancy. —Judy Thomson



Lois Porter and Hank Stebbins, recipients of "Open Space Preservation Leadership Awards"

Kiosk Builders Promote Preserve Visits

This spring, over a dozen volunteers spent more than 80 hours honing their carpentry skills to erect informational kiosks at three MHLC preserves in the town of Bethlehem. Materials were purchased using \$800 donated from a benefit concert by the Friendship Singers, a local women's chorus that recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. While some information and maps are currently posted, additional interpretive materials will be added soon. The Conservancy hopes to merge these three preserves along Delaware Avenue with existing town parks and trails to create a "tri-village greenway" throughout the town of Bethlehem..

Kiosk Builders, at left: Judy Thomson, Spiro Socaris, Jill Knapp, Marie Miles, Peggy Sherman, Pete Seagle, Richard Nathan, Eric Jackson

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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Mark Your Calendar

August 4: Clarksville Heritage Day, Clarksville

August 11: Kiosk building at Indian Ladder Farm, volunteers needed

September 11: Volunteer Recruitment; find out more about the Conservancy and how you can get involved. Volunteers are particularly needed to staff our display at events throughout Albany, Schenectady and Montgomery counties, such as Earth Day, Albany History Fair, and Indian Ladder Farm.

**Sunday, September 23, Gala Luncheon and Silent Auction.
Pruyn House, Town of Colonie, 1-4 PM**

**Please help make this event a success by making a
donation to our silent auction. Call 436-6346.**

October 21: Volunteer Thank You event -- to acknowledge our appreciation to those whose volunteer efforts have contributed to our success.

On-going: Tri Village Committee; Join us for information and volunteer opportunities in the Delmar, Slingerlands, Elsmere area. Call 436-6346 for information and meeting dates.