



ViewPoints

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Meet our New Executive Director

Jill Knapp, a long time resident of this area with a wealth of experience in land preservation, became our first Executive Director on October 3. She was introduced to members on September 18 at the MHLC gala.

Since receiving her PhD from Purdue in 1986, she has worked and taught in a variety of conservation situations, including Executive Director of Conservation Districts of Iowa, Coordinator of the Walkkill River Task Force (a project of Orange County Land Trust), and Public Information Officer of the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission.

The Board found her to be passionate about the mission of land trusts, enthusiastic about this region and eager to begin contributing to the next phase of MHLC's development.



MHLC Executive Director Jill Knapp

"I love upstate New York," she said, "and having lived in and traveled to other areas of the country, I am delighted to be back where I grew up."

Knapp is looking forward to her new job.

This area is rich in history, full of recreational opportunities, and offers some of the most beautiful scenery. While living in the Midwest, I would always get homesick in the fall when I remembered the gorgeous colors of the Helderbergs and the trips with my parents to Indian Ladder Farms to buy apples. I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy and look forward to helping protect the best features of this region for future generations!

Her appointment was made possible by a New York State Conservation Partnership Program grant administered by the Land Trust Alliance Northeast Program.

MHLC Board President Dan Driscoll emphasized the importance to the Conservancy of her appointment:

With eleven preserves and one easement, the Conservancy has nearly reached the limit of what a volunteer organization can do. Considering that the board has given initial approval to over a dozen new land preservation projects, it is clear that we now need full-time professional staff. Jill Knapp was chosen from a field of 40 applicants. With her outstanding qualifications, Jill is the perfect person to be our first full-time executive director.

A Community Preservation Fund: Could It Be the Answer For Your Town?

The Community Preservation Act — a statewide bill currently pending in Albany — would give towns a new planning and preservation tool. It's not a mandate, but rather the authority and option to create a Community Preservation Fund, financed by a small real estate transfer fee.

In many towns of the Mohawk-Hudson region, rapid building is fueling interest in community preservation — that is, preservation of the open lands, beautiful views, working farms, and historic landmarks that make a community unique. Numerous comprehensive plans identify specific lands to protect or set open space goals. Reviewing these visions leaves us hopeful about the future of our towns and the lands we love.

But many towns lack the funds to implement these plans. They may require serious investments to purchase land or to enter into voluntary conservation agreements with farmers. As the real estate market remains hot, towns are scrambling to provide parks, open space, and protected drinking water for new residents.

Community Preservation... cont.

If the Community Preservation Act were to become law, any town in New York could create a Community Preservation Fund supported by a real estate transfer fee of two percent or less. This fund could then be used to protect natural lands or historic landmarks, either through acquisition or conservation agreements. Currently, towns can only create such a fund with special permission from the Legislature.

Under the act, a town interested in this approach must first develop a Community Preservation Plan to describe how the fund would be spent. The town would have to pass a local law and a referendum in a general election creating the fee. In order to protect affordable housing, the fee, paid by the buyer, would apply only to property transactions above the median price in that county.

This approach replicates a successful program in place in five towns on Long Island's East End, providing a revenue stream for community preservation and the ability to leverage much more from state and federal grant programs, most of which require a local match. It is a pay-as-you-go solution that doesn't affect property taxes and doesn't require borrowing. It would help many communities in this region shape their futures.

The bill is relatively new – it was first introduced in 2004 – but it has made much progress, gaining the Governor's support and passage in the New York State Assembly during the 2005 session. Unfortunately, the bill has not yet been allowed to the Senate floor for a vote, but advocates remain optimistic for 2006. To learn more about the Campaign for Community Preservation, an effort of Environmental Advocates of New York, contact Rob Moore at 518-462-5526 ext. 238 or see <http://www.eany.org/issues/openspace.html>.

--Anne Reynolds

Mosses at Winn Preserve



Jean Kekes

About a dozen naturalists, some experienced and some novices, gathered at the Winn Preserve on a warm sunny day in late July. Jean Kekes, a retired microbiologist, led the

Winn moss walk and showed us a variety of mosses, from *Tortella tortuosa* to *Dicranum polysetum*. Using

hand lenses, we could observe and appreciate their different structures.

Many mosses have pockets capable of holding large amounts of water, a feature that allows them to survive dry periods; Native Americans recognized that quality and used mosses to diaper their children.

Another moss grows on limestone; we found some that was brown and dead looking, but when sprayed with water, it immediately came to life and turned green.

Our preserves harbor a wonderful variety of life; they are truly special places.

--Dan Driscoll

Saving Special Places

But how do we decide which places are special?

Just this month, the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy chose a new tag line -- *Saving Special Places* – a phrase designed to encapsulate our mission and quickly communicate what we do. Yet this phrase conjures a further question:

Which places are special?

With a mission as broad as "protecting natural and cultural resources,"

Conservancy

volunteers realized the need to focus. We cannot preserve and protect all land in our region, so we had to decide which places are the most unique, valuable, and deserving of preservation.



First, to be of interest to the Conservancy, a parcel of land must provide one or more of the following:

- **Scenic vistas and view points** of distant mountains, forests, rolling farmland, rivers, or the dramatic City of Albany skyline.
- **Geologic importance** with particular educational or research opportunities.
- **Stream corridors** that could provide public access to streams or streamside trails, or protect water and water habitats.
- **Trail corridors** that guarantee long-term access to trails, extend or link existing trails or provide new trail networks. The Conservancy is particularly interested in the Long Path and the Hudson River Trail.

Saving...cont.

- **Working landscapes**, including farms and forests that protect nature and add to a community's character while also providing someone in our community a living.
- **Wetlands**, because they provide homes for fish and wildlife, flood protection, aquifer recharge, and because wetlands are disappearing rapidly.
- **Significant habitats** for endangered species or areas used by migrating wildlife, and lands containing exemplary ecosystems.
- **Historic or archaeological areas** that are important cultural resources.

With these values in mind, the Conservancy identified three specific areas of interest: the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, the Pine Bush, and the Helderberg Escarpment. Our expansion into counties of the Mohawk Valley will add other priorities. Note that these priority areas are not exclusive; any lands that provide the resources listed above could be considered.

Determining whether a site falls into one of these categories is the first step in the Conservancy's process. Once it has been determined that the site is of interest, the Conservancy's Board of Directors considers the potential public benefit and the long-term stewardship responsibilities. What public benefit would result from the Conservancy's involvement in securing the property? Will the public have access? Is the property significant to the community's history or character? Is the property large enough to protect the resources associated with the site? The Board examines surrounding land uses, likely impacts if the land were developed, and the condition of the property.

The Conservancy has a responsibility to look toward the future, and consider ongoing stewardship requirements of the property. Each site needs a sound but affordable management plan including provision of stewardship endowment funds by the owner/donor or some other

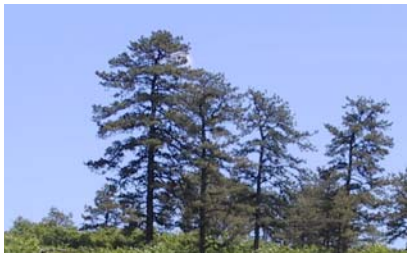


Photo Courtesy of the Albany Pine Bush Commission

source. Do the land's characteristics limit opportunities for public use? Would development on adjacent land diminish the property's conservation values? The Conservancy must decide if it has resources to buy the land and take care of it for the long haul.

Saving special places involves not just passion and resources, but focus. Knowing we can't preserve all lands, the Conservancy focuses on those that provide important and unique values to a community, and then considers both the public benefit and our own long-term responsibilities. In this way, we hope to pursue those preservation projects that protect truly unique and wonderful lands, using an approach that gives us the confidence to declare our ability to protect the land.

--Anne Reynolds

We All Had a Mighty Fine Time

In mid-September 130 members and friends enjoyed the fifth annual MHLC Gala at Don and Anne Eberle's lovely



Woodwind Farm in Voorheesville. Food by Glen Sanders, music by George Ward, Bill Spence and

George Wilson, and tours of the Eberle's Hudson River Murals combined with the beautiful weather to enhance the occasion. Thanks to our sponsors, V. Costa, Cotton Hill Studios, Jim and Leisha Vinci of Delmar Wine and



Liquor, Dr. Alexander Filipp, Indian Ladder Farms, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc., Oliver's Beverage Center, and Young,

Sommer, Ward, Ritzenberg, Baker & Moore, LLC., for making the Gala possible.

Volunteers Needed

Each of our committees welcomes volunteers. Get your hands dirty by helping with Stewardship. If you have great people-skills, Membership and Fundraising will vie for your assistance. If writing is your special gift, the Public Information Committee needs your help. Whether you can spare an hour or a day, contact us at 436-6346 or mhlc@mohawkhudson.org.

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- Please send me more information about land conservation options available.
- I would like to host a Friend-raiser Gathering.
- I would like to be a Conservancy volunteer.
- The above membership is a gift from _____

All contributions to the MHLC, Inc. are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.