



Saving Special Places

Vistas

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2005 Annual Report

President's Message



I am happy to share with you a summary of our accomplishments in 2005. It was an exciting year for the Conservancy and brought about some important changes that I believe will enhance our ability to *Save Special Places* throughout the Mohawk Hudson region.

After many years of involvement beyond Albany County, the Conservancy signaled its commitment to serve the growing interest in land protection in Schenectady and Montgomery Counties by formally adopting its new identity as the *Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy* in May. Our new name and expanded vision garnered publicity in the local media and positioned MHLC to work with established partners in the expanded area, such as the Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady and the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor Commission. Our Mohawk Valley Committee began meeting regularly to increase awareness of our activities and identify opportunities for land protection in our expanded service area. In 2005 it began working on three easements and one land acquisition project

We became a professionally staffed organization in 2005. In March, the Conservancy was awarded a \$38,000 Staffing Grant by the Land Trust Alliance, to be paid over 2 years to assist with our transition from an all volunteer to a staffed organization. We were fortunate in attracting two highly qualified applicants to fill the positions of Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. In October Jill Knapp, Ph.D., a native of Latham, began as Executive Director. She has significant experience with land use issues, having served on the Iowa Legislative Commission on Urban Planning, Growth Management of Cities and Protection of Farmland. She also worked as a Cooperative Extension Educator and has experience in non-profit management, agriculture, and education. In December 2005, Helen Smith, joined the Conservancy as Administrative Assistant. Helen has an MBA and experience in hospital administration and standards compliance. She has been actively involved as a volunteer with the PTA in the Bethlehem School District. Jill and Helen bring a wealth of experience and skill to the organization to help implement the board's strategic plan.

We completed transactions on several parcels of land in 2005 – Normanskill Preserve in Elsmere, Onesquethaw Creek Preserve on Rarick Road near New York Audubon's Hollyhock Hollow Preserve, Bozenkill Preserve in the Town of Knox, and an expansion of our Bozenkill Preserve in Guilderland – bringing our total of protected land up to 1173 acres. We initiated the transaction process on three other parcels, including two in Schenectady County and one in Montgomery County. We hope to complete at least two of these in 2006.

Our Treasurer reports that 2005 was a record year for many reasons.

Expenses rose by 91%, primarily due to hiring our staff and related office expenses for the last quarter of the year, but cash income rose by 77% due to success in building membership, a record Gala fundraiser, and \$19,000 of grant income. As a result, we were again able to operate at a surplus. Our success in protecting land in 2005 generated substantial, but non-cash, contribution income.

	2005	2004	% change
Total Income	\$90,237	\$51,041	+77
Total Expenses	52,483	27,443	+91
Net Ordinary Income	37,754	23,598	+60
Land Contributions	151,021	21,055	+517
Net Income	\$188,775	\$44,653	+223

We expect operating deficits in 2006-2008 because of the significant increase in staff-related expenses. In the short term this loss will be funded by our recent years' accumulated surpluses: but beyond that it is vital to our mission that we succeed in increasing revenues as called for in our four-year plan.

I would like to thank all of our dedicated volunteers, board members, committee members, and others, who led hikes, assisted with our annual gala, and contributed their time and expertise to our programs. It is through their work that we have accomplished these goals.

Dan Driscoll
President

Executive Director's Message



The last quarter of 2005 was a busy time for both the Board Members and me as we all transitioned to a staffed organization. From painting our office and consolidating records that had been scattered between board members, to hiring an Administrative Assistant, writing grants and visiting our preserves, it has been a whirlwind of activity. With committees and board members freed of many administrative duties, energy has been redirected into developing our preserves, expanding our membership, and focusing on land protection programs.

Our office, in the Slingerlands Methodist Church, is now regularly staffed. As Committees and individuals actively promote our mission of land protection, we are finding more opportunities to work with individual landowners, communities and other conservation organizations in the Mohawk Hudson region. As development reaches into rural areas, we are receiving an increasing number of calls from long-time landowners concerned that their lands will someday be turned into housing lots and requesting information on options available to them for protecting their properties. To address this need, workshops are planned for 2006 to provide information on the impacts of development on natural resources and strategies to manage growth with resource protection. In

addition, again we will be hosting a series of outings to increase awareness of our efforts and the beauty of our preserves.

I'd like to thank all of the board members, committee members, volunteers, and my assistant Helen, who have provided valuable expertise, and hours of time, and good counsel. Together we can *Save Special Places* throughout the Mohawk Hudson Region.

Jill Knapp
Executive Director

Committee Reports

Tri-Village Greenway. This Committee has taken an active role in promoting land preservation activities in the Town of Bethlehem and in managing our three preserves in the town. It is currently working on acquiring a fourth preserve. Monthly meetings, well-attended by local residents, energize this Committee and provide opportunities for volunteers to actively participate in the work of the Conservancy.

Planning for public access at the Normanskill Preserve began in the fall and is expected to result in marked trails by late spring 2006. Committee members have revived interest in using the Swift preserve, a wetland located across Delaware Avenue from Bethlehem High School, as an out-door classroom, and encouraged the school's Science Department to include the preserve in its ecology curriculum. Preliminary trail work will begin in the spring of 2006. The Committee has already created a trail system in our Phillipinkill Preserve and it is now open to the public (with signage provided by the Mansions at Delmar). Interest from the Boy Scouts is expected to result in further improvements to the trails and signage.

Mohawk Valley. The Mohawk Valley Committee began meeting on a regular basis in the fall of 2005, with the purpose of increasing awareness of the need for land protection and identifying priority areas for preservation. One of its first efforts was the submission of a grant application to the Land Trust Alliance to help identify priority areas for protection in Montgomery County, expanding on a recent study of Albany and Schenectady Counties by the Open Space Institute. We hope to hear soon whether it will be funded.

The Committee has also been discussing opportunities to collaborate with other organizations in the Mohawk Valley in making communities and individual land owners aware of their land protection options. It is currently working to acquire three easements and one preserve.

Membership/Development. Membership increased from 260 in 2004 to 343 in 2005, an increase of 32%. Not only was the number of members up in 2005, but total contributions increased as well. We thank all of you who contributed to our fund appeals. Our fund development plan calls for an increase of at least 150 members for each

of the next four years. As of April 2006, we are well on our way to reaching our goal.

Our 2005 annual Gala was held in September at Don and Ann Eberle's historic home in Voorheesville. The weather cooperated to make for an enjoyable and profitable fund-raiser for the Conservancy. The addition of a silent auction helped increase revenue by over 18% compared to 2004. Plans are underway for the 2006 Gala, which we hope will be as well supported and even more profitable.

Six outings were held in 2005 to introduce our members and friends to MHLC preserves and other natural areas in the region. These outings, led by volunteers with extensive knowledge of local plant and animal life, provided a wonderful educational experience for those who attended. In 2006 we will again have a full schedule of outings to help increase awareness of our preserves and the benefits they offer to local residents.

Public Information. *Saving Special Places* was adopted as the tag line for the Conservancy in 2005. We believe that this simple phrase captures the essence of our mission – protection of places that enhances the region's quality of life. This phrase is being incorporated into all of the Conservancy's printed materials. The Committee published three newsletters in 2005, updating friends and members on the Conservancy's activities. Our website provides a wealth of timely information about our programs and activities. We encourage you to check our website www.mohawkhudson.org regularly for updates on outings and volunteer opportunities.

Land Stewardship/Preservation. The combined Land Stewardship and Land Preservation Committees reviewed several parcels of land for protection in 2005. Based on the Conservancy's established criteria for determining whether properties have sufficient conservation value to warrant protection, the Committee recommended that the Conservancy pursue acquisition of parcels in the towns of Bethlehem and Amsterdam. A 2006 closing is anticipated for these parcels.

Work with two landowners in Wolf Hollow, in the Schenectady County Town of Glenville, progressed, with both landowners anxious to complete conservation agreements that will permanently protect their parcels from development. A grant application has been submitted to the Land Trust Alliance to assist with the transaction costs of these projects. We anticipate a 2006 closing for both parcels.

The Land Stewardship and Land Preservation Committees also worked with Neighborhood Committees at several preserves to implement management plans that include trail maintenance and development. Inspections were completed on our Indian Ladder Farm easement and on the Ketcham easement, which we monitor under an agreement with the easement's owner, the Open Space Institute.



Saving Special Places

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Mark these MHLC events on your calendar:

**Saturday, May 6, 2006, 8 AM,
MHLC and Hudson Mohawk Bird Club Present a
Bird Walk in Ashford Glen**

The bird walk will be lead by Ellen Pemrick. Meet at the entrance to the preserve, at 20 Ashford Lane, Colonie.

**Sunday, May 7, 2006, Noon-4 p.m.
7th Annual Albany History Fair
Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center Corner of
Clinton Avenue & Broadway**

Exhibits, Music, Storytelling, Demonstrations, Tours, Historic Games and more!

FREE ADMISSION! Call 434-4791 or 434-0405 for information.

**Thursday, May 11, at 6:00 p.m.
MHLC Annual Meeting**

The Stockade Inn in Schenectady

Tickets for dinner and the annual meeting will be \$45 per person. To reserve your place, send a check to MHLC, PO Box 567, Slingerlands NY 12159.

**Sunday May 14, 2006, 8 a.m. sharp!
Mother's Day Bird Walk**

Lone Goose Pond – Rensselaerville

Led by expert bird watcher Frank Murphy. For details: Call Helene at 797-3139 or hggpjb@msn.com

**Wednesday, May 17, 7:30 PM
Friendship Singers concert at the Delmar Reformed
Church**

The concert is free. Contributions will be donated to MHLC for improvements at the Phillipinkill and Normanskill Preserves in the Town of Bethlehem.

**Monday, May 22, 1-3 pm, Friends of Normanskill
Farms Plant sale in cooperation with the Albany
Garden Club at the farm.**

Call Tom Gallagher (765-3500) for more information.

**Sunday June 4, 2006, 1-4 pm
Family Day at MHLC Preserves in Bethlehem**

Visit the Phillipinkill, Swift, and Normanskill Preserves.

Vistas is the annual report of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy and is also available at www.mohawkhudson.org/pubs.htm.

Edited by Rodger Fink (rfink@nycap.rr.com).

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