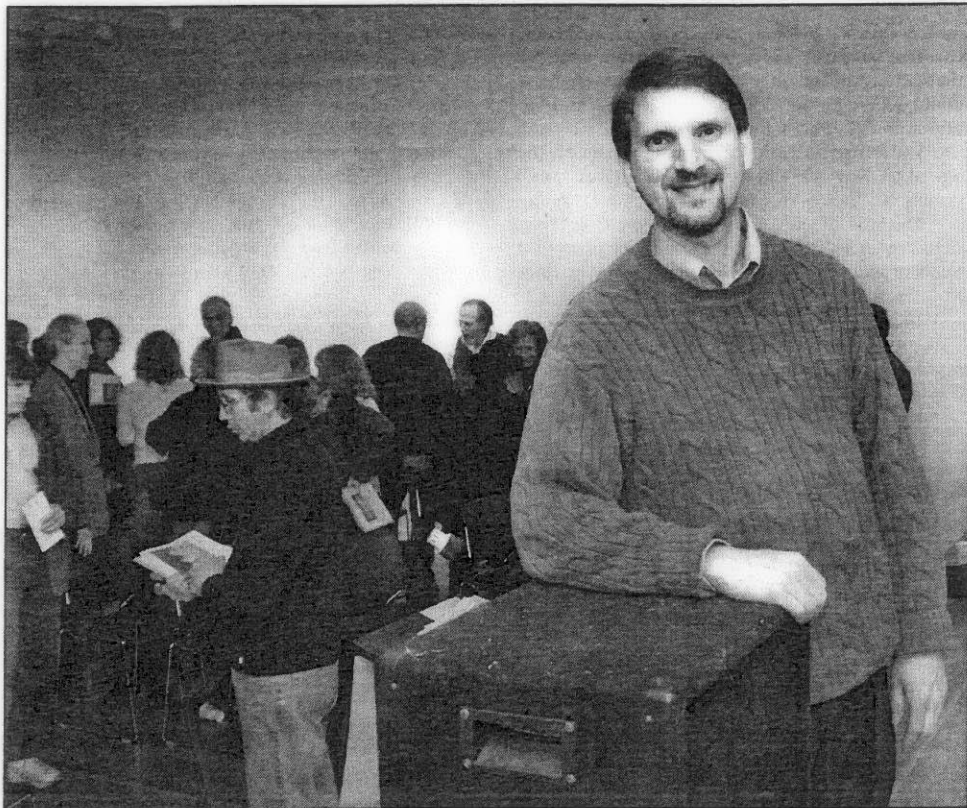


# Conservancy can

## Land preservation group completes a banner year



DIXON OGDEN

Woodstock Land Conservancy director John Winter

Woodstock Land Conservancy director John Winter, on the job since last New Year's, says it's time to move on from the organization's Save Overlook campaign of the past two years.

"We've done a lot of the work we wanted to do there and have largely met all of our goals," he said during a recent lunch meeting in which he described new changes — and challenges — facing the stalwart "little land conservancy that could."

Winter said that he and the WLC Board of Directors had completed putting together their annual

appeal letter the previous Saturday, and was mailing it out to a trimmed-down direct mail list of 500 local and part-time area residents in the coming week, along with advertising in the local media.

"About 20 new single family homes have been built annually in Woodstock in recent years. Perhaps you've noticed the sudden appearance of survey flags, a chain across a trail, new driveways, or houses in those special places you've walked, biked, or driven by. While some development is necessary and even welcome, as a community we know there are certain places that, if developed,

would change the character of the Woodstock area forever," reads the new letter dated December 4, 2006. "It is these special lands that WLC is committed to protecting. Now more than ever we need you to stay involved so that we can meet the challenges ahead together."

Continuing, the letter signed by WLC President Michael DeWan points to the "doubling the size of the State-owned Overlook Wild Forest," Winter's new stewardship of the organization, the creation of a handsome new "Safeguarding Our National Legacy" brochure, and the impending opening up of an 88-acre parcel owned by the WLC for public use... a first in the entity's history.

Winter, in his face-to-face updating on the Land Conservancy, similarly expressed excitement at the work being done to get trails, mapping and an informational kiosk up at the Sloan Gorge Preserve, an 88-acre parcel off Glasco Turnpike with rock formations, vernal pools, and two bluestone quarries, by next spring.

"It's a nice walking site, a gem," said Winter, who added that the WLC was also working towards the opening up, next summer, of another 36-acre parcel on Yerry Hill known locally as "Snake Rocks," with stunning cliffside views of the Wittenberg Valley.

Additionally, Winter spoke enthusiastically about the various "relationships" the Land Conservancy has been working on in the past year, from its work with the Open Space Institute and the state Department of Environmental Conservation saving Overlook from further developmental pressures to work with other emerging conservancies, including the Saugerties-based Esopus Land Conservancy, to keep up regional efforts at land preservation.

Along this latter line, Winter stressed the importance of legislation passed in Albany this past year that allows tax credits of up to 25 percent for property put into official easements with groups such as the WLC.

"It's a really great incentive we want to educate people about," said the former director of corporate giving at Green Mountain Coffee in Vermont, who now operates his own social responsibility consultancy in addition to working part time for the Land Conservancy. "It comes into effect this coming year, for this past year's taxes, and opens up a whole new mosaic of land protection possibilities."

As for the reasons behind the new narrowcasting of their annual appeal letter, which used to go out to everyone with a 12498 zip code, as well as a number of residents in adjoining areas, from West Hurley to West Saugerties, Winter said it all came down to questions of effectiveness... and expense.

"It's a way of better targeting donors, of building relationships with those who have supported us over the years," Winter said, noting that the new lists were made possible via the acquisition of a new

database program called Giftworks. "This allows us to keep in closer contact with those who have kept us strong over the years."

Along similar lines, questions about who might need the most thanks for the final push that achieved most of the Overlook campaign's goals, and has helped make the last year so successful for the Woodstock Land Conservancy, Winter and DeWan both stressed that what was most important was the way everyone involved rose to the occasion.

"2006 was really an ensemble effort," Winter said.

"As you know, we have a new Executive Director," noted DeWan, in his usually infectious fashion. "As a result, we have gotten a huge amount of things accomplished: A lot of internal re-org that may not show but has made all the difference. As a result we have gotten our Board revved up like I've never seen it..."

Added Winter, in person, and most humbly, "In the end, we see this all as a gift to ourselves. Down the line, we'll be glad these things have been set aside. It's a gift to ourselves..."++

Paul Smart

*For further information on the Woodstock Land Conservancy, its programs and how to access new tax credits for property conservation easements, call Winter and the WLC at 845-334-2418 or visit [www.woodstocklandconservancy.org](http://www.woodstocklandconservancy.org).*