

NEWS SHORTS

Ashokan Rail Trail

Since January, 2020 there have been 180,000 visitors, with another 25,000 in late 2019, a measure of the immediate and ongoing popularity of this trail. The volunteer trail stewards program has been a great success and we are so grateful for the community's participation in this effort. We are enormously proud of how clean the trail is thanks to our stewards and all of you. We recently said goodbye to our resident goats, who have returned to their farm for winter. They were an added delight, along with the many sightings of birds, coyotes, bear, bobcat and the occasional porcupine, so aptly captured in Bill Wall's video on ashokanrailtrail.com Follow happenings on FB – Ashokan Rail Trail. Big thanks to Ulster County for this beautiful trail.

Pollinator Planting

We are grateful to more than 120 property owners who committed to plant pollinator friendly plants, avoid pesticides, and begin converting lawn to meadow. Look for upcoming events. Expert Doug Tallamy presents a virtual lecture on October 7th, 7pm, which will also be recorded and made available on-line. To join us, visit www.woodstocknypollinatorpathway.org

Israel Wittman Sanctuary

In the coming weeks this beautiful sanctuary — donated in 2016 by Elaine Chaback — will unveil a second loop trail, a one-mile walk both below and above a rock ledge system. Stay tuned for the opening announcement. The sanctuary offers more than 2-miles of forested multi-use trails, mostly of a gentle grade. A small parking area is located at the end of Old Sawmill Road, Saugerties, off of Zena Highwoods Road. If full, please return another time, as there is no roadside parking on the single-lane neighborhood dirt road.



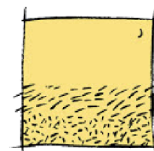
THREATS TO LANDS & THEIR INHABITANTS

850 Route 28 proposed Steel & Concrete Manufacturing Plants

In recent months WLC, together with Catskill Mountainkeeper, has submitted consultant reports on noise impact, historic/cultural significance and hydrological issues to Town of Kingston Planning Board affecting the project's surrounding neighbor, the NYS's DEC's Bluestone Wild Forest. We have raised many concerns and continue our call for the Planning Board to issue a POS DEC – Positive Declaration that there are impacts - in the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process so that a proper Environmental Review of Impacts can be done. For updated information, check out our website, saveonteoralake.org as well as the FB pages: Save Onteora Lake, Pickerel Pond & Bluestone Wild Forest; and FB: Bluestone Forest.

Construction and Debris Dumping

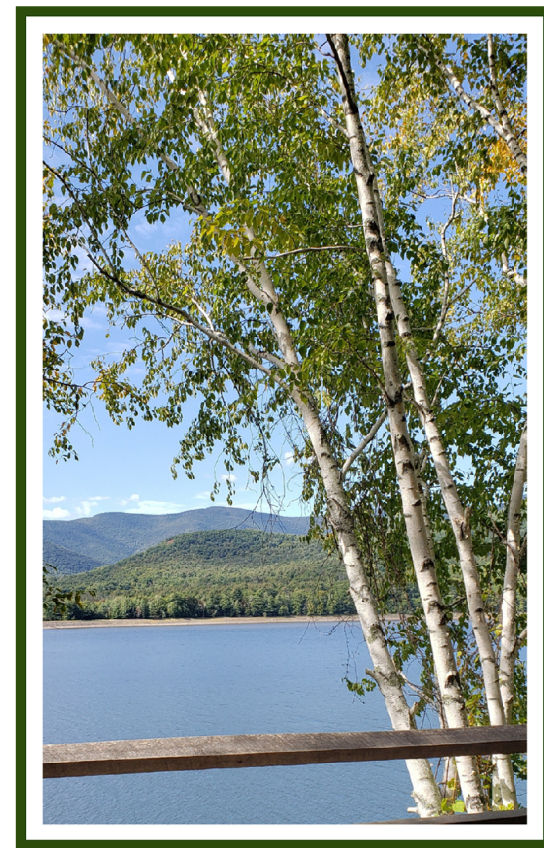
A neighborhood in Woodstock's hamlet of Shady appears to have a substantial construction and debris dump in their midst. There is great concern for individual homeowners, including one directly downhill from the dump site, and the impact on neighbors' well water, along with a tributary to the Sawkill Creek. A similar situation with the same contractor occurred in recent years in West Saugerties. The neighbors' challenge took several years and involved Town of Saugerties, NYS DEC, and multiple law enforcement divisions. It was additionally adjudicated in the New York State Supreme Court. Dumping in various parts of Ulster County has been increasing from distant locales. Ulster County Legislators enacted a new law to challenge this, but dumping remains a significant problem where laws and rules are ignored and violated.



WOODSTOCK LAND
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LAND LINES

FALL 2020



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LEANING IN

When the crickets started their chorus a few weeks back, it marked for me the transition from summer to fall. And with cooler temperatures and the leaves changing color, the autumnal equinox has arrived. During the past six months WLC has been as busy as ever, keeping up with unprecedented use of the trails we steward.

The Ashokan Rail Trail has had 180,000 visitors since January. WLC made a commitment to support Ulster County in keeping this open during the pandemic, and our Board Chair, President and me, along with a few hearty volunteers did, aiding so many who were seeking solace and inspiration in the outdoors at this time. We also have seen more visitors at our Sloan Gorge preserve. By summer's end hikers there enjoyed two newly-installed sculptural stone stairs. (For more details see SG story in this newsletter).

Our collaborative Pollinator Pathway (PP) project has exceeded our expectations, now counting more than 120 participating properties since its February kick-off. And our PP webinars have been well-attended through both live-streaming and the growing library of past events available on our PP website. (More detail in News Shorts.)

As we tiptoe back together outside for our First Saturdays on the Trail programming, with limited enrollment, we long for the days when we will be able to gather again with all of you, our community -- we miss seeing you!

Wishing you all well. We are here for you, our beloved community, with our preserves, our programming and our continued commitment to protect the land, water and natural resources that we all hold so dear.

Best,
Maxanne Resnick, Executive Director



Sloan Gorge Trail Building Volunteers August, 2020

SETTING HIGHER GOALS

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

In recent months, WLC's Board has begun a multi-faceted discussion on understanding DEI and how our organization can improve its practices with respect to these issues, as well as consideration of land ownership and environmental racism. We want to recognize Kingston Land Trust's Julia Farr and Shaniqua Bowden for their work on this. At our September board meeting they shared with WLC's board and staff KLT's process in pursuing socially responsible conservation. We are grateful to our KLT colleagues for this and admire their many fine initiatives. We welcome your input on this. Please contact Maxanne Resnick, maxanne.wlc@gmail.com with your thoughts.

Five Year Strategic Planning Update

WLC Board is in the process of updating its Vision 2020 Strategic Plan for the next five years. Work has included identifying and gathering information from members of our community, along with the Board's discussion of DEI. A survey will be emailed to share WLC's work and learn what is valued most by our community. If you'd like to be involved as a stakeholder, please email Maxanne Resnick, maxanne.wlc@gmail.com.

SLOAN GORGE GETS A FACELIFT

Sloan Gorge is a treasure of mixed-wood forest, bluestone quarries, and dramatic cliffs of Catskill sandstone. If you've never walked here then you've missed a real treat. Opened to the public since 2007, this 88-acre preserve was a gift from the late Woodstock Artist, Allan Edward Sloan. The mile-long trail includes a self-guided geologic tour written by Robert Titus, PhD, Department of Geology, Hartwick College, and offers a window into understanding the Catskills' geology, and the gorge's creation in the last stages of the Ice Age.

In 2019, we were fortunate in receiving a trail improvement grant from the NY State Conservation Partnership Program (a joint program between NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the NY Chapter of Land Trust Alliance -- and funded by NYS's Environmental Protection Fund). Working with a professional trail company, Tahawus Trails, we were able to undertake these improvements this summer, a bit delayed by COVID-19. Our grant included the installation of several sets of stone stairs; the setting of stepping stones in a wet area of trail; and the rebuilding of a collapsed area of the trail. It also included five days of trail building training for 10 volunteers. In two weekends, volunteers learned to build a flight of stone stairs and their training should be helpful for future trail building efforts on our properties. Volunteer Laney Salisbury said, "Volunteering for the Woodstock Land Conservancy is a great opportunity to get outdoors while also socializing and doing something positive for our community. I also hope it inspires others to help take care of our valuable natural resources, which provide us with a lot of peace and reflection. In building these stone stairs, we were surrounded by the preserve's beauty and the magnificence of these stones used from the site, which, by the way, were also really heavy."

Enjoy the beauty of this preserve, located at 487 Stoll Road. Parking is limited.