

# Conservancy's ascendant mode

## Pres DeWan in a good frame of mind

**W**oodstock Land Conservancy President Michael DeWan has been up on a par with his organization's fortunes of late.

He's been looking forward to the official opening of the new Sloan Gorge Preserve, an 88-acre tract of land located off Stoll Road (near West Saugerties and Goat Hill Roads) this Saturday, June 30, at 1:30 p.m. He's been trumpeting the symbolic strengths inherent in the WLC's recent receipt of a \$3,100 matching grant from a joint effort by the Land Trust Alliance and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation that has dispersed \$400,000 to 30 land trusts across the state.

Perhaps most importantly, he's ecstatic about the way the recently-placed Willy Neumann sculpture of a giant frame that's been placed on the Land Conservancy's first and signature holding at the Zena Cornfield has brought to the forefront all that the WLC is about, while simultaneously giving that sense of mission a new currency via a concurrent controversy characteristic of all things Woodstock.

"It's a way of allowing people to get a whole other experience of the cornfield and its view of Overlook Mountain; a great look at Woodstock through the eyes of an artist," DeWan said this week after explaining how Neumann had come to the Land Conservancy about placing one of two frame sculptures on the field as a means of amplifying the experience of the similar frame he placed in front of the Woodstock Artists Association and Museum to help publicize its recent Paint Out fundraising event. "He wants to use the frames as a way of reaching out to kids and others, teaching them the discipline involved in making and thinking about art. And that's truly what we're about, too, reaching out to teach people how to be good stewards of the land. It seemed a marriage of missions, a way of reaching more deeply into the community..."

DeWan noted that the opening of Sloan Gorge, the organization's first real public trail and educational tool that's been publicized in these pages over recent weeks via a series of essays by renowned regional geologist Bob Titus, who will be on hand Saturday, is a major step forward for the WLC. He referred to it as an outdoor classroom, a place open for use by all in town.

"It's emblematic of a new phase of growth for us," he said, speaking about reaching out to more than transplanted New Yorkers, but to the area's more native residents... who have been sought to use the Preserve's old bluestone quarry as a means of bringing back to life the region's older ways, and more traditional economic bases.

As for maintenance, DeWan said that such concerns should be minimal, given the nature of what the WLC has built at Sloan Gorge. But from the looks of



**Zena Cornfield and Overlook Mountain from John Joy Road.**

things, volunteerism, including a strong helping hand from the Preserve's neighbors, should suffice.

Regarding the \$3,100 Conservation Partnership grant, DeWan again spoke about the symbolic value of the funding. It will be used, he said, to prepare

the WLC's board for future growth planning, and plans.

"It also indicates a ripening of our ability to work with other local, state, national and even international organizations on an effective basis," he added. "From working with the Open Space Institute, New York City Department of Environmental Protection and state DEC on our recent Save Overlook campaign, we've shown our mettle as a strong collaborator. It's about building bridges..."

DeWan said all of these elements will be discussed at the Sloan Gorge event this weekend. And for further campaigns, including a new push to go full-time with its hiring and activities, over the coming months.

"When all is said and done, it's really the land that creates the ties that bring us together as a community," he added.

To get to Sloan Gorge this Saturday, June 30, by 1:30 p.m., when tours will take approximately one and a half hours, take West Saugerties Road 1.1 miles to Goat Hill Road, then left onto Stoll Road. After .2 mi the WLC kiosk will be to one's left. Park only in the new Sloan Gorge parking lot.++

Paul Smart

*For more on the Woodstock Land Conservancy, visit its Website at [www.woodstocklandconservancy.org](http://www.woodstocklandconservancy.org) or call 347 408-1273.*