



Woodstock Land Conservancy

Contact Information

Keisha L. Hoerrner

Communication & Outreach Mgr.

(678) 525-1537 (c) or 845-679-6481 (o)

keisha@woodstocklandconservancy.org

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Immediate Release

Conservancy Secures Largest State Stewardship Grant in Its History

Funding will Support Proposal to Build Trails, Parking at New Preserve

Thanks to a 2024 New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) grant totaling \$62,770, the Woodstock Land Conservancy hopes to prepare a new 30-acre preserve in Hurley for the public. It is the 20th NYSCPP grant in WLC's history and the largest annual award to date.

"Opening a preserve to the public requires huge steps to make the project viable," WLC's Executive Director Andy Mossey explained. "This grant will help to ease some of those strains and will enable WLC to build sustainable public spaces and open this preserve for people to enjoy."

According to Land Acquisition and Stewardship Manager Melissa Peterson, the more than 30 acres were donated to WLC by George and Christy Martin in May 2022. "We were honored to receive this donation, especially knowing how special the property was to the Martins. They purchased it in 1982 and conserved it for five decades before entrusting that responsibility to the Conservancy," she said.

After researching the land, consulting with trail experts and creating a draft site plan, Peterson prepared the grant proposal that includes plans for a public trail, parking area, information kiosk and interpretive panels. Once the state's budget was approved last month, the Conservancy learned its request was approved in full. It was one of 15 grants awarded in the "stewardship and resources management" category and one of 64 projects funded with approximately \$3 million.

The grant money supplements private gifts made in 2022, when the preserve was first donated. A generous donor agreed to match up to \$25,000, doubling the amount raised. "Partnership is key to so many WLC successes," Patty Goodwin, WLC board president, said. "Especially on ambitious projects like this, linking support from our generous community to government and foundation

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P.O. Box 864, Woodstock, NY 12498 / 845-679-6481 / info@woodstocklandconservancy.org

grants allows us to accomplish mission critical goals – like preserving land and creating new ways to connect people to nature.”

The preserve is near the Ashokan Reservoir and has historical ties to the U&D Railroad corridor. The land partially abuts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) property, which is not available to the public. The Conservancy will be seeking the Town of Hurley’s review and approval for the proposed parking area, trailhead and walking trail. The proposed interpretive signs will guide visitors along the trail to highlight historically significant features of the property.

Mossey explained it typically takes at least a year to plan a public trail, work with local town boards and other officials to gain the necessary approvals, and then construct the trail. “Our goal is to open the new trail and possible parking area next summer, but we will follow the timeline established by the Town of Hurley,” he said.

The NYSCPP is a public-private partnership between the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation and the Land Trust Alliance. The first NYSCPP grants were awarded in 2003. “The Alliance has long supported WLC’s growth, and it is also the national organization that provides our professional accreditation,” Kevin Smith, WLC board chair, said. “We remain grateful for its vision and activism, especially now when land preservation and environmental awareness are ever more important.”

About WLC

The Woodstock Land Conservancy is committed to the protection and preservation of the open lands, forests, water resources, scenic areas and historic sites in Woodstock and the surrounding area. Accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, the Conservancy protects and stewards more than 1,000 acres of land in the eastern Catskills area. Learn more at <https://www.woodstocklandconservancy.org/>.

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