For many of us, there has been a lot of focus this year on the national scene, and speculation about how policy changes may impact our ability to conserve land.

While it's certainly true that federal decisions can impact us here in Columbia County, it's also true that much of the work we do at the local level is independent of these larger forces, and our work has a powerful ripple effect. We remember the words of John Muir - “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”

During this year’s annual fundraising drive, we celebrate the role the Columbia Land Conservancy plays in making positive ripples in our regional landscape, and the tremendous network of people that come Together for the Land to do this important work.

In the pages of this newsletter, you’ll be inspired by variety of ways that people like you, who love Columbia County, have joined with others to work towards real change:

• Scores of volunteers have taken on projects that include monitoring baby birds, removing invasive plants, and creating better habitat for threatened pollinators,
• Local municipalities and community groups are coming together to plan projects to connect more people to nature through building a larger regional trail network, and making progress on transforming the former landfill at Hudson's North Bay into a recreational site,
• A multi-state coalition of land trusts has formed a regional partnership to take a landscape-scale view of the Berkshire-Taconic Region, and identify conservation strategies,
• Farmers and private landowners are working with CLC to ensure the legacy they leave is one that preserves Columbia County’s rural character, and
• We continue to be inspired and overwhelmed with gratitude at the many supporters who contribute to our work, and to special projects like protecting the Thompson-Finch Farm.

We hope you will join together with us during this important time, and make a donation to our annual appeal. Your contributions help us continue to create the kind of future we want for Columbia County, and beyond. Thank you for your generosity.
Last year, your donations made it possible to protect family farms, provide free educational programs, manage public preserves for habitat and recreation, and work with partners and landowners to conserve Columbia County’s rural character.

Join us, and let’s keep up the good work - donate today at clctrust.org/together.
Improving Habitat at Siegel-Kline Kill

The birds, bees, and butterflies at the Siegel-Kline Kill Public Conservation Area have more food to eat and habitat available, thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers, led by Master Gardeners Glenda Berman and Tim Kennelty.

“When I was visiting Siegel-Kline Kill, I noticed that there was a lot of Japanese honeysuckle along the trails, which is a big problem,” says Glenda, who was instrumental in starting this program. “The honeysuckle tends to grow really rapidly and make it difficult for native plants to grow. As a result, there aren’t as many types of animals and insects as there could be.”

Glenda and Tim joined forces, and reached out to CLC with a plan to help improve Siegel-Kline Kill’s habitats. A kick-off event was held over Earth Day weekend, where volunteers dug up hundreds of pounds of Japanese honeysuckle.

Since then, volunteers have come together three more times to dig up more of the honeysuckle, prepare the site for tree planting, and install native trees and shrubs.

“Earlier this year the Siegel-Kline Kill volunteers cleared a large stand of invasive Japanese honeysuckle shrubs. This fall we planted native trees and shrubs in the cleared area. The native oaks, maples and viburnums will support a wide variety of bird and butterfly species,” says Tim Kennelty, one of the volunteer leaders.

So far, the volunteers’ efforts have been paying off. The honeysuckle has been nearly eliminated from large patches of the trail, and the new trees and shrubs are starting to thrive.

“It’s great to have such a dedicated crew of people excited about adopting the site like this,” says Nate Davis, Public Lands Manager. “With only three staff to manage all 4,000 acres of CLC’s Public Conservation Areas, having volunteers like Glenda and Tim and the people working with them makes a big difference in our ability to manage the site.”

More volunteer work parties to improve the site are planned for next spring. If you’d like to get involved with this project, or form your own group to adopt a Public Conservation Area, please contact John Horton, Membership & Volunteer Programs Coordinator, at 518.392.5252, ext. 210 or john.horton@clctrust.org.

You can also check out the CLC events calendar online at clctrust.org/events.
“After you approach the nest box and lift the lid to see what’s inside, you’ll get out your data sheet, and use these codes to keep track of what you see,” John Horton explained to a group of half a dozen students from Hudson High School.

It may seem difficult to get high school students excited about filling out paperwork, but that's just what these young people had signed up for as part of CLC’s pilot nest box monitoring program.

CLC installed ten nest boxes for native bluebirds and other species at Greenport Conservation Area earlier this year, then teamed up with Hudson High School to find out what happened next. After participating in a training session, students visited the boxes two times per week during spring and summer.

At each visit, they’d check to see if the boxes were occupied by birds, if and when eggs hatched in the boxes, and when the young birds left the nest. Approximately half of the nest boxes were utilized by the birds, and student volunteers counted several dozen eggs.

All of this information was collected on the aforementioned data sheets, then entered into Cornell University’s NestWatch program website. Collecting data like this is of regional and national consequence - according to nestwatch.org, “Our database is intended to be used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals.”

“It was really inspiring to work with these students this summer - their dedication to collecting good data to help bird populations is something you don’t run across every day,” John says. “I’m looking forward to doing more of this next year, and finding other ways to collaborate with local schools and youth groups.”
New Public Conservation Areas, Brought to You In Part by the Greenagers!

Creating and maintaining Public Conservation Areas requires contributions and expertise from many different people. Some of the most special people we’ve had the opportunity to meet are the Greenagers - students who engage in paid natural resources conservation work to prepare our sites. This year, we employed two crews of young adults - one based at Scotland Farm, and another that traveled to several CLC sites.

The crew at Scotland Farm called themselves the “dream team.” That moniker was well-earned! In just six weeks’ time, they:
- hiked 19 miles to post the property’s boundaries,
- built several bridges and two sets of stairs on the property’s trails,
- resurfaced one trail and built another,
- hauled enough garbage to fill a 30’ container, and
- refurbished exclosures that are part of a research project measuring the impact of deer browse.

One of the members of the Scotland Farm crew was Jacob Kulyniak, who has worked with CLC every year since we started this partnership with the Greenagers.

“I learned about the Greenagers when I was in high school,” Jacob says. “I wanted to sign up because I love being outdoors, and this was a job that allowed me to do that all the time. I think it’s prepared me well for my chosen future career. This year was pretty great - one of the projects we worked on was a fairly large bridge going across a stream. We cut large cedar trees with an ax - it was very difficult, but very rewarding.”

Jacob is currently studying wildlife management at SUNY-Cobleskill, and hopes to pursue a career as a Park Ranger or Environmental Conservation Police Officer.

We hope that when this property opens in early 2018, you’ll appreciate all the hard work these young adults have put into getting it ready!
While the Scotland Farm crew was hard at work in the southern end of the county, another team of Greenagers busied themselves at Hand Hollow and Harris Public Conservation Areas.

The crew took to the water at Hand Hollow, removing invasive water chestnut from Meizinger Lake. Once that work was completed, they turned their attention to preparing the Harris Public Conservation Area for its opening, which took place October 18.

“I think my sister and I raked every trail on this property,” said Adriana Tampasis, who found out about the Greenagers through the Hudson High School Environmental Club. “She really pushes me to work hard - it’s just amazing, we’ve done so many things I didn’t think I’d be able to, like rolling rocks that probably weighed 500 pounds. We figured out a way to use logs to roll them, and now they’re part of the staircase we built.”

Helping students realize their potential to make a difference is one reason CLC continues to partner with the Greenagers, a nonprofit based in Great Barrington, year after year.

“Working with these students is one of my favorite parts of the year,” says Nate Davis, Public Lands Manager. “They have so much energy and enthusiasm, and the work changes them - even though it’s a relatively short time, they accumulate a whole array of new skills, and a new respect for the land.”

To find out more about CLC manages our Public Lands, or how you or a young adult in your life can get involved with the Greenagers, contact Nate Davis at 518.392.5252, ext. 205 or nate.davis@clctrust.org
Don and Marnie MacLean have been growing organic vegetables at the Thompson-Finch Farm in Ancram for the past 35 years. Thompson-Finch is especially well known for its organic strawberries, with many customers driving for hours each year to pick their own berries. The MacLeans also grow blueberries, apples, and a variety of vegetables.

Unfortunately, the Thompson-Finch Farm is now at risk of being sold for development. In what has become a common story in the Hudson Valley, rising real estate prices could force this iconic fifth-generation farm to shutter its business unless immediate action is taken to protect the land. To head off this threat, CLC has joined with Equity Trust, the MacLeans, and several other partners to raise funds to buy the farm.

Since beginning our efforts in early 2017, the campaign has raised more than half the farm’s $1.5M purchase price - over $850,000 from hundreds of supporters.

Why is it important to protect this farm?
The Thompson-Finch Farm is an exceptionally valuable agricultural and community resource.

In addition to its high-quality soils, the farm is situated on the banks of the Roeliff Jansen Kill, an important stream for trout and other sensitive aquatic species. For the past 35 years, Don and Marnie MacLean have balanced operating a highly successful farm business with farming practices that protect the important native plants and animals that depend upon Thompson-Finch Farm’s fields, forests, and wetlands for habitat. Protecting this property will build on the farmers’ efforts and conserve these critical habitats forever.

What will happen if the campaign is successful?
Success in this campaign assures this property will remain a working farm forever. CLC will own and manage the land, and rent it back to the farmers under a long-term lease.
Support for Agriculture

The farmers will own and maintain the farm buildings, and will continue to make improvements to the farm (for example, fencing, irrigation, etc.), with the right to recoup that investment when they transfer to the next farmers. The farm will also be protected with a conservation easement.

CLC will open and maintain a small hiking trail providing access to the Roeliff Jansen Kill, and in collaboration with the farmers will offer occasional educational workshops and other opportunities for community engagement. The lease will include language requiring the land to be farmed and allowing for a transition to a new generation of farmers.

**How can I contribute?**

We hope you’ll join us, and make a contribution to the farm today - visit clctrust.org/thompsonfinchfarm to track the progress of the campaign!

You can make a donation online at clctrust.org/thompsonfinchfarm, or by sending a check to CLC at 49 Main Street, Chatham, NY 12037.

Checks should be made out to The Columbia Land Conservancy, but please be sure to include “Thompson-Finch Farm” in the memo line so we can correctly attribute your gift.

“A Campaign to Save Thompson-Finch Farm”

“It is a rare moment when what you absolutely must do out of necessity turns out to also be the best thing and the thing you truly want to do.

Faced with the certainty that the land we had been farming for over three decades would be sold, we turned to the Columbia Land Conservancy and Equity Trust in search of a way of saving the farm from sale and development.

We can keep the farm affordable for generations of future farmers and preserve that which so many have come to love. A place of food, beauty, friendship, and sanctuary.”

*Farmers Don & Marnie MacLean*
Banks are for more than just storing money - hay banks can provide important sources of food for animals like donkeys, horses, and cattle.

Hay banks are reserves of hay set aside for animals facing any number of situations - disaster relief, death or a change in an owner's financial situation, neglect, or unwanted animals. Hay banks are often maintained by an animal welfare organization, like Godspeed Horse Hostel in Amenia.

Godspeed Horse Hostel is a non-profit organization that works to rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome unwanted horses. In 2015, it began a hay bank program to assist rescue animals of all kinds.

The hay bank has distributed over 2,300 bales of hay since its inception. Much of the hay comes from landowners who donate the use of their property for hay making, though they may not be farmers themselves. In return, the landowners get their property managed for a good cause, are eligible for an agricultural tax exemption, and get an income tax deduction for their hay donation.

Currently, Godspeed Horse Hostel is working with three easement landowners in Columbia and Dutchess Counties, but we are always looking for more hay - ideally, 5,000 bales per year.

Landowners can make a “virtual deposit” to the hay bank - a promise to make, save, and store a certain amount of hay. This allows Godspeed to distribute more hay without actually making and storing it. Having pockets of hay throughout Columbia and Dutchess counties is a bonus - it means we can help animals in a larger area, more quickly.

Unfortunately, hay banks in the Northeast are relatively rare despite the large amount of rich agricultural land available, with only a few currently operating. Supporting organizations like Godspeed Horse Hostel by donating hay can make a big difference for local animals.

There’s a common misconception that once a property has a conservation easement on it, CLC owns the land, or the land can’t be farmed. This simply isn't true - in this issue, we are pleased to share a great story about how a fellow nonprofit, Godspeed Horse Hostel in Amenia, is working with owners of easement lands to produce hay for a hay bank. We thank Mia Genovisi, Director, for her contribution, and encourage you to find out more about the great work she’s doing at godspeedhorses.org.
The exceptionally scenic Doyle Farm sits on prime real estate in the heart of Columbia County. Its views of the Catskills and surrounding lands would make it valuable to developers and second-home owners, but the Doyles (now in their fourth-generation on this property) are not interested in selling their farm. They would rather continue working its fields and making sure that the land they have cared for and cherished for so long remains open for agriculture.

The Doyles have been farming in Columbia County since 1875, when Patrick Doyle purchased 90 acres of farmland in the Town of Austerlitz to raise sheep for meat and fleece. As the sheep farming business began to decline, the farm transitioned to a dairy, growing to 700 acres by the mid-1970s. At the height of their dairy operation the Doyles milked 120 cows and grew their own hay and feed. These days, Joe Doyle, his son Patrick, and nephew Dave Jones grow hay on the property and are planning for the transition of the farm to the next generation.

As a central part of that transition, this past September CLC permanently protected the farm from development in partnership with Scenic Hudson Land Trust and with funding from the New York State Hudson Valley Agricultural Enhancement Grant. The entire project encompasses nearly 600 acres of high quality farmland, including protection of neighboring lands owned by Ron and Kristen Davis, who generously donated the conservation easement on their property as part of the overall transaction.

In addition to the hundreds of acres of prime farmland, the Doyle Farm also contains important wildlife habitat and woodlands that have been left largely untouched for decades. The farm is also rich in local history. It is adjacent to an historic one-room school house where Joe’s father John went school.

“We raised 4 amazing children here on the family farm, and when coworkers asked where we lived I always said God’s country. Now we know it will continue just as we planned for the generations and community to come,” say Joe and Nancy Doyle.

To find out more about this program, contact Marissa Codey, Deputy Director of Conservation Programs, at 518.392.5252, ext. 211 or marissa.codey@clctrust.org.
Growing up in Columbia County, nature was an elemental part of my life. I splashed in the Bash Bish Brook that runs through the Taconic State Park, picked strawberries at Thompson-Finch Farm every June, and logged countless miles biking the Harlem Valley Rail Trail. What I didn't realize at the time was that there was an amazing organization actively working to protect natural places like these throughout the county, in order to maintain their distinctly unique rural character.

The Columbia Land Conservancy formally entered my life two years ago, when my life-long family friend, Heidi Bock, asked me to come work as a summer intern between my sophomore and junior years of college. I graciously accepted and excitedly returned to my former stomping grounds. Even though I had moved away ten years earlier, the land looked and felt the same—thanks, in large part, to CLC.

Here at CLC I am a part of the stewardship department. Right now, we are finishing our annual stewardship visits for the season. This entails traipsing around on foot on half of the conservation easements properties every year, equating to hundreds of miles all said and done!

My favorite part of my job is going out and meeting landowners; many of whom have their own stories of growing up in Columbia County. As much fun as it is to be outside, I also enjoy returning to the office to devote time to reaching out to landowners, organizing files, and spending time with my favorite co-worker, the copy machine. I love working in a relatively small office because it allows me to be involved across all departments and gain valuable insight into how decisions are made in a non-profit organization.

While I am no longer a little girl—naïve to the challenges facing our environment, I hold onto the unwavering hope that, together, we can work to conserve and protect the only environment we have. The Columbia Land Conservancy has shown me that this is possible. I am lucky to work for an organization that is constantly working to maintain the beauty and character of a place that so many call home—from farmers, to vacationers, to girls returning after a long time away.

Bea Lawson is a cheese fanatic, believes passionately in her weekly horoscope, and overuses the term “dude” when addressing people. She graduated from Denison University with a degree in environmental studies and biology and is hoping to one day hike the Appalachian Trail—and is still trying to convince Heidi to do it with her.
Flower on a wildflower walk

Herding dogs demonstration at Family Fun Day

Rainbow at the Conservation Easement Landowners Gathering

Sunset Yoga at Ooms

Monarch caterpillar at Greenport

Herding dogs demonstration at Family Fun Day
Spontaneous Snowshoeing

Have a hankering to get outdoors during the winter months?

Join our email list for Spontaneous Snowshoeing at our Public Conservation Areas by sending an email to John Horton at john.horton@clctrust.org.

We’ll send a message to you with a time and location when conditions are right for outdoor recreation.

Winterfest Celebration
CLC Store
December 9, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Stop by the CLC Store during Chatham’s annual Winterfest!

Local children’s book illustrator Chuck Groenink will be available to sign copies of his latest book, William’s Winter Nap, from 11:00 a.m. - noon. We’ll also have treats, nature-themed crafts, and sales on books, branded apparel, and high quality toys from brands like Melissa & Doug and Petit Collage.

November

Full Beaver Moon Guided Hike
Hand Hollow Public Conservation Area
November 4, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Take a guided hike under the Full Beaver Moon. Beaver are highly active at this time of year.

All events are subject to change based on the weather and other factors.

Please check clctrust.org for an updated calendar and to register.

December

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Monitor Training
High Falls Public Conservation Area
January 20, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Hemlocks need your help! Join our monitoring team and learn to identify and track of this invasive insect.

January

Winter Wildlife Walk
Greenport Public Conservation Area
January 6, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Where do animals go in the winter? Learn to identify tracks and scat as we search for signs of wildlife.

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Hemlocks need your help! Join our monitoring team and learn to identify and track of this invasive insect.
Programs are made possible thanks to support from the Mellam Family Foundation, T. Backer Fund, T.D. Charitable Foundation, Harney & Son’s Tea, and the CLC Members/Founder’s Fund.

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**February**

**Great Backyard Bird Count**
Ooms Public Conservation Area
**February 17, 7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.**
Help collect population data on our local birds with CLC Trustee and expert birder Will Yandik.

**Volunteer Gathering**
The People’s Pub, Chatham
**February 24, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**
Current and prospective volunteers are invited to join us for our annual volunteer gathering.

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**March**

**Maple Sugaring Tour**
The Farm at Miller’s Crossing
**March 17, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**
Discover how maple syrup is made with CLC Trustee Chris Cashen!

**Pancake Breakfast**
Triform Camphill Community
**March 24, 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**
Current CLC members are invited to enjoy delicious pancakes at our annual thank-you event.

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**April**

**Woodland Pools Exploration**
Harris Public Conservation Area
**April 14, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**
Ever wonder what’s living in the temporary pools that appear each spring? Join us to find out!

**Earth Day Bioblitz**
Scotland Farm
**April 22, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**
Help identify as many species of plants, animals, and fungi as possible at our first-ever Bioblitz!

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**Be Smart Like a Fox - Give the Gift of Membership!**

For $25, you can purchase a gift membership for someone on your shopping list this holiday season!

Benefits include:
- A commemorative fox pin
- Subscription to CLC’s newsletter
- Invitations to the annual Pancake Breakfast
- Free hunting & fishing permits
- Discounts in the CLC Store

Stop in to the CLC Store or call us at 518.392.5252 to purchase one today!
Over the course of the past fifteen months, CLC has been working to lead a coalition of 15 land trusts and partners from multiple states to devise strategies to protect the Berkshire-Taconic region.

Where exactly is the Berkshire-Taconic Region?
The area is defined by the spine of the Taconic Mountain Range, but includes the foothills and agricultural river valleys of the surrounding landscape. In total, the partnership area is 150 miles long and covers about 3,300 square miles. It extends as far north as Brandon, Vermont and as far south as Poughkeepsie, NY. It includes Pittsfield, MA on the east and comes close to Troy, NY on the west.

Why is this region so important?
The Berkshire-Taconic Region includes large, unbroken blocks of forest land. These large forest blocks play an important role in providing drinking water, striking scenery, and habitat for bear, moose, and other large mammals, but all of that could change if the forest is broken up by development. These blocks of forest land were also identified as being particularly important for climate change resilience by the Nature Conservancy.

The Berkshire-Taconic Region has been identified as an area of importance in a number of different plans. The New England Governors’ Conference Commission on Land Conservation’s 2010 Report to the Governors identified the Berkshire Taconic Landscape as a priority under its “Keeping Forests as Forests Initiative.” The Report describes the region as “a landscape containing an extraordinary number of rare species threatened by development and climate change.” The area also shows up in the Forest Action plans of NY, MA, CT and VT, and in the NY Open Space Plan.

Unfortunately, even though the region has been identified as being so important, it sometimes suffers from a lack of attention because so much of the area lies along state borders.

What are partners doing to protect the landscape?
Organizations from Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York have been meeting regularly since early in 2016 to identify potential areas for collaborative land conservation.

As a result of this collaborative planning process, partners are now ramping up efforts for conservation action. Two examples of activities the partners will be engaged in include actively
pursuing sources of funding to sustain the partnership, and reaching out to landowners living in the region to increase conservation in key spots along state borders.

Do you live in the Berkshire-Taconic Region?
Stay tuned to find out more about how you can make sure you leave a legacy that preserves this special landscape.

This work was funded by a grant from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust Fund at the Boston Foundation.

For questions about the Partnership, please contact Lee Alexander, Conservation Projects Manager, at lee.alexander@clctrust.org or 518.392.5252, ext. 215.
Natural Resources Are Everywhere

It’s easy to see that Columbia County is a special place - scenic views abound, streams are home to fish and wildlife, and large swaths of forest create habitat for everything from large mammals to tiny songbirds. And soon, thanks to a collaborative partnership, we’ll know more about exactly how special Columbia County is.

The first-ever Inventory of Natural Resources of Columbia County is taking shape, and members of local government and farmers will preview it this fall. The inventory describes ridges and bedrock, water resources, habitats, farmland, plus scenic and recreational resources found in Columbia County. It will be a reference document for local government and landowners. The maps, descriptions, and data contained in the Natural Resource Inventory will inform planning for the future in ways that support the County’s natural assets and the benefits they provide.

First imagined in 2016, the Natural Resource Inventory got underway early this year, thanks to a grant. The inventory is a collaborative effort. CLC’s Community Projects Manager, Christine Vanderlan, is coordinating the NRI, which is being prepared by Hudsonia, Inc., with contributions from the Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program. A small group comprising members of the County Environmental Management Council, Cornell Cooperative Extension, CLC, and community volunteers are working as an advisory team, and the Hudson River Estuary Program is serving as an advisor as well.

In the spring, an invitation went out to the public requesting photos be submitted to help enrich the document. Through the spring and summer, many individuals around the county submitted photos of all kinds of natural settings and subjects, from milkweed to a limestone ledge to goldfinches.

Over the coming weeks, the draft Inventory will be evaluated by representatives of local government and the Columbia County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to help shape the final product.

“We’re excited to be able to share draft sections of this Inventory,” says Christine Vanderlan, “This is the first document of its kind to weave together all this information in one place, and it is meant to be a constant reference for local decision-makers.”

Partners plan to release the Columbia County Natural Resources Inventory in 2018. This project has been funded in part by a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

To find out more about the NRI, visit the EMC’s website at goo.gl/cNTXjW or contact Christine Vanderlan at 518.392.5252, ext. 208 or christine.vanderlan@clctrust.org.
Community Planning and Engagement

North Bay Trail Idea Gets Closer Look

The idea of an initial trail connecting the City of Hudson with the Greenport Conservation Area via the old landfill at North Bay continues to be explored.

This idea was closely studied in the Concept Master Plan for the North Bay Recreation and Natural Area published by CLC in 2011 (available on our website). Working in or around an old landfill demands careful study and planning, as well as approval from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation which regulates closed landfills.

We’re excited to share that Columbia County was awarded a grant from the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to plan and design an initial gateway area and trail. The work is being guided by an Advisory Group made up of representatives from the County, the City of Hudson, and CLC. This state grant funding means the County has been able to hire a landscape architecture firm, Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners, to design an initial trail. More information about the North Bay Recreation and Natural Area is available on our website. Stay tuned for news about progress on creating the trail and opportunities for public comment!

Empire State Trail Coming Soon!

The year opened with an exciting trail initiative direct from Governor Cuomo who announced the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile trail that would make it possible to travel by foot or bike from New York City to Canada and from Albany to Buffalo. Excitement built this summer when it became clear that the Albany-to-Hudson electric trolley line would be part of the Empire State Trail. This will bring to fruition a trail idea a group of dedicated volunteers has been working on locally. Over many years, the Town of Kinderhook, the Villages of Kinderhook and Valatie, Friends of Kinderhook Trails and the other trail advocates studied the idea, made detailed plans, and began to negotiate with the key landowner National Grid which owns most of the old trolley line land.

“We’re truly delighted because the Empire State Trail will connect more communities in what is a growing rail trail network in Columbia County, and beyond,” says Christine Vanderlan, Community Projects Manager. CLC coordinates a Task Force of trail supporters, local government agencies, and others working toward a countywide trail network.

Earlier studied under the name the Kinderhook-Stockport-Stuyvesant Trail, it is now called the Albany Hudson Electric Trail, for the old trolley that ran along this route. The Albany-Hudson Electric Trolley operated along 35 miles from the City of Albany to the City of Hudson from 1899 to 1929. The trolley was powered by electricity from a hydroelectric plant at Stuyvesant Falls. The plans for this trail bring it past the Greenport Conservation Area.

The Greenway has released a concept plan for the Albany Hudson Electric Trail and is taking comments. To find out more, and stay informed about the process, visit ahettrail.org. Photo courtesy ahettrail.org.
There are so many ways we can work together for the land we love - volunteering time and expertise, managing our properties to promote good habitat for wildlife, sharing our enthusiasm for this special place - and of course, donating funds.

This year, CLC is celebrating all of these contributions during our annual fundraising drive, and we hope you’ll participate. Nearly 90% of our annual support comes from donations from people like you, who value the work CLC does to preserve Columbia County’s farmland, forests, and wildlife habitat.

We need to raise over $500,000 between now and the end of the year - visit us online at clctrust.org/together to track our progress and learn more about how your donations are put to good use!

Become a Land Steward with a Monthly Gift

“Gloria and I give monthly to CLC because it is the most effective organization in protecting Columbia County’s beautiful natural resources, the reason we moved here in the first place.” -- Michael Kadish

In these uncertain times, it’s important to have friends you can count on. The Columbia Land Conservancy relies upon our generous, regular, donors for support in order to achieve our mission.

As a Land Steward, you receive special benefits for your leadership giving, including discounts in the CLC Store, invitations to our annual Pancake Breakfast, a subscription to the CLC Newsletter and monthly email updates, and recognition in CLC publications. Donors who contribute $500 or more in a calendar year also become members of The 1786 Society.

Visit clctrust.org/donations or contact John Horton at john.horton@clctrust.org or 518.392.5252, ext. 210 to become a Land Steward.
Join The 1786 Society This Year

When you donate $500 or more, you become a member of The 1786 Society!

What is The 1786 Society? It’s a group of donors whose give generously to support our work to keep Columbia County rural. Columbia County was founded in 1786. Though much has changed since then, the county remains a scenic rural area with extensive natural resources, abundant wildlife, and a thriving agricultural economy. We celebrate donors who contribute $500 or more to sustain these efforts through membership in this special group of supporters.

Members of The 1786 Society receive special benefits for their leadership giving, including opportunities to experience CLC’s work first-hand - see photos of a bird walk at a unique private property, a behind-the-scenes gathering about CLC’s latest efforts, and a tour of some CLC farm projects below. To find out more about The 1786 Society, contact Erica Hann at erica.hann@clctrust.org or 518.392.5252, ext. 202.
Leaving a Legacy:  
Piers Forestier-Walker

April 14, 1950 – May 11, 2017

CLC’s first-ever Public Lands Manager, Piers Forestier-Walker, passed away earlier this year, following an extended illness. Piers started working with CLC in April 2004, and was responsible for much of the look and feel of CLC’s Public Conservation Areas. The properties he managed are a living legacy that bears witness to his care and devotion to the land.

To celebrate his life and honor his contribution to Columbia County, a volunteer event was held in late August. Nearly two dozen volunteers and staff members gathered together at Ooms Public Conservation Area to share memories, reflect on the beauty of the site, and clear away brush from a viewpoint. The viewpoint will be the site of a stone bench built by volunteer Tim Smith, and is a site Piers selected himself.

A bonfire and dedication ceremony is planned for the spring.

On behalf of all of us at CLC, we’d like to thank those of you who came out to celebrate Piers’ life by connecting with a place he found particularly special.
Welcome new board and staff!

Steve Corsun joined the CLC board at the September 2017 meeting. Steve is the Board Chair of Premier Brands of America, a manufacturer of health and beauty aids. He and his wife Laura have supported CLC since 2001, and their oldest daughter Hilary owns and operates a farm immediately adjacent to Ooms. Steve currently serves on their Executive Committee of the Hudson Hall at the Historic Hudson Opera House. He’s also on the Board of the Mt. Vernon Chamber of Commerce and the Advisory Committee for the High and Mighty Center.

Whitney Bushey joined CLC in June 2017 as a Public Lands Steward. Whitney grew up roaming New England’s woods, lakes and mountains and went on to earn a degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Maine. Whitney has spent many seasons traveling the northeast United States and wore out several pairs of hiking boots working as a park ranger, conservation land steward and trail builder. Now she is thrilled to land in beautiful Columbia County and put down roots working to conserve a landscape with room for both wildlife and local communities.

Beth Mills, Ph.D., joined CLC as the Director of Conservation Programs in July 2017 after working for many years in New Mexico where her focus was on community and open space planning, land protection, and conservation. She worked with both the local government in Santa Fe and with the New Mexico Land Conservancy, a statewide land trust. Born and raised in Connecticut, Beth was motivated to return to the northeast, and to rediscover her “home” environment. She is interested in the local food movement, supports the vision of sustainable development for rural areas, and has been charmed by the beauty and unique character of Columbia County.
The Jonathan Schor Society is named for a long-time Trustee and dedicated supporter who made a substantial bequest, including a gift of land that is now Schor Public Conservation Area, to CLC when he passed away in 2004.

Planned giving is critically important to provide the capacity to achieve our mission over time. A portion of planned gifts may be designated towards CLC’s endowment, essential for maintaining the lands we own and manage in perpetuity.

CLC would like to recognize supporters who have chosen to leave a legacy for the future of Columbia County through these transformational gifts. If you have already made a provision for CLC in your estate plan, please let us know so that we may acknowledge your gift. Members of the Schor Society are invited to attend special gatherings for major donors, and - with their permission - recognized in CLC publications.

However you choose to give to CLC, we are grateful for your investment in Columbia County’s future. Please contact Peter R. Paden, Executive Director, if you’d like to discuss a planned gift to CLC. He can be reached at 518.392.5252, ext. 213 or peter.paden@clctrust.org.

### Current Members

- Anonymous
- Betty A. Engstrom
- Robert Funck
- Rene Gibson
- Elisabeth Grace
- Judy Grunberg
- Robert Herron
- Lowell Johnston
- Peter Jung
- Kitty Osterhoudt
- Jon Hopkins Trachtman
- Richard Trachtman
- Renee Vaughn & Denise Drever

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Thank you, Business Sponsors!

We thank our generous business sponsors for their support of our work to keep Columbia County rural. When you’re out and about in the County, please let them know you saw their ad and appreciate their contribution! To find out more about how your business can support CLC and receive recognition, contact Erica Hann at erica.hann@clctrust.org or 518.392.5252, ext. 202.

We thank those donors whose ads are not pictured: CaroVail, Inc, Flint Law Firm, Great Performances, John P. Kingsley, Esq., Marvin & Company, P.C, CPAs, Taconic Biosciences, Windy Hill Farm.

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Conservancy News Fall/Winter 2017
The Columbia Land Conservancy works with the community to conserve the farmland, forests, wildlife habitat, and rural character of Columbia County, strengthening connections between people and the land.