



Walkkill Valley Land Trust

ESOPUS, GARDINER, LLOYD, MARLBOROUGH, NEW PALTZ, PLATTEKILL, ROSENDALE, SHAWANGUNK

FALL 2013 NEWSLETTER

PROFILE: Abels Easement

Seven Meadows Farm by Lynn Bowdery

Gregory and Janet Abels just celebrated the 30th anniversary of their purchase of Seven Meadows Farm, their 64 acre property in Gardiner, NY. Back in 1983, wanting a place in the country within a two-hour drive from their home in Greenwich Village, they found this property within their radius. When asked what it was about this place that led them to choose it, Greg described the appeal of the spaciousness of the old farm, with its 360 degree view of all the fields from the farmhouse, its mixture of hill, woods, and stream, its long driveway back from the main road. Another important factor for Greg and Janet is the wildlife that the varied habitats of the property fosters— the stream, wetlands and pond, meadows, hedgerows and woods are rich with birds, mammals, insects, and herps (reptiles and amphibians) for Greg, who in high school had considered being a herpetologist. Recalling the day in August they were making the decision to buy the property, Greg remembered noticing the grasshoppers hopping in the grass at their feet, and how it touched his heart to see them. They gave it the name Seven Meadows Farm, and indeed, it has seven meadows.



Marty Kiernan's cattle.

The farm had been owned by Erick Olsen, who moved there in 1941. He raised and sold Italian plums and other fruits and vegetables and hayed the fields, although he also had an outside job. Back in the 20's, there had been dairy cows and cheese was made there. The 19th century barn has some dairy stalls, and the soil of what had been the barnyard is still especially rich.

Greg credits their daughter Caroline with providing the impetus for them to donate the conservation easement on the farm. She was 10 years old when Seven Meadows Farm became their country place and the rural landscape has become, in a way, her calling. Caroline brings a master's degree in Environmental Advocacy and Organizing to her journalism career in Vermont as editor of Vermont's Local Banquet Magazine (see: localbanquet.com) and founder-editor of Humaneitarian.org, a website that inspires people to buy and eat humanely raised meat. Caroline also suggested bringing cattle back to the farm. Greg met and got to know Gardiner beef farmer



The Seven Meadows Barn, with reflection in pond.

Continued on next page...

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Mission:

Wallkill Valley Land Trust's mission is to enhance the quality of life in Southern Ulster County by conserving lands of scenic, agricultural, ecological, recreational and cultural significance.

A Letter from Our New President

Greetings –

This has been a year of major accomplishments for the Wallkill Valley Land Trust. We recently were recognized with the “Best of the Hudson Valley Award” for our four year project to restore the Rosendale Trestle. As part of that effort, we have doubled the length of the rail trail which now extends from Gardiner all the way to Kingston. This is a recreational treasure we all share and of which we all can be proud. We currently are working with our sister organization, the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association, for them to take over stewardship and maintenance for the entire 24 miles.

We are becoming a membership organization. All our supporters - long term and new – now can join us as Members of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust family! This greater community engagement will enable us to continue and to expand our important work. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in Southern Ulster County by conserving lands of scenic, agricultural, ecological, recreational and cultural significance. With the trestle and rail trail work wrapping up, we are re-energizing our efforts with willing land owners by permanently protecting more of the lands that underpin the economic vitality and unique beauty of our region. Please join us and become a Member today! We look forward to working with you to sustain the values that make this such a wonderful place to live.

Cheers,
Chris Bernabo

Continued from previous page...

Marty Kiernan at his stand at the New Paltz Farmers' Market, and this led Marty to keep some of his 100% grass-fed, pasture-raised cattle on the farm, carefully rotating them from field to field for optimal pasture management.

The Abels became aware of the activities of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust through the publicity and outreach events for the Two Farms Project, which resulted in the preservation of the Jewett and Khosla Farms on Huguenot Street in New Paltz through conservation easements on those prime and historic farms. Greg said that donating a conservation easement just “feels like the natural thing to do.” He added that he has great confidence in WVLТ’s ability to maintain the easement and preserve the land.

It's A Small World!

Chris Bernabo and his wife Heather lived on the Abels property in the early 1970s. They rented a small farm cottage from Erick Olsen while studying at SUNY New Paltz. Chris is now the President of the WVLТ Board of Directors. “This was a marvelous place to live surrounded by nature. It helped inspire my passion for the natural sciences,” Chris said. “We spent many hours observing the abundant wildlife and were enriched by the peaceful spirit of the land.” He added, “The Abels’ are wonderful stewards of this special place with such amazing biodiversity and pastoral charms.”



WE DID IT!

Thanks to the incredible generosity of many of our faithful supporters, and the continuing dedication of our partner – the Open Space Institute - the 11.5 mile of the extension of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail is now OPEN!

When we acquired the rail bed in Rosendale and Ulster, including the trestle, in August of 2009, we knew that doubling the length of the existing rail trail in New Paltz and Gardiner (where we hold the conservation easement, but do not own) would be an exciting yet challenging endeavor. The restoration of the trestle was the focus of our fundraising and the successful \$1.5 million campaign allowed us to carry out a full engineering analysis, remove the old partial decking, construct and install new steel railings, and finally put in recycled decking on the entire length of the trestle.

None of this would have happened without the donations, large and small, from people all over this area, some from out of state and the volunteer efforts of many who believed in our vision of what the opening of the trestle would mean to this region. These private donations, together with the grants we received from the Office of Parks and Recreation, the Samuel Freeman Trust, the Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy, and Church Communities, allowed us to complete the vital link in the center of the 24 miles of rail trail. We celebrated the grand opening of the trestle on June 29, 2013 and more than 500 people joined us for the celebration!

Another pivotal moment in this project occurred in early September with the opening of the Williams Lake Project section of the rail trail. The Wallkill Valley Land Trust and Open Space Institute worked closely with the Williams Lake Project on a temporary trail easement, and the permanent trail easement will occur once final project approvals are complete. This 1.5 mile section of the extension of the rail trail contains some unique historical aspects of the Rosendale cement industry which have been identified with interpretive signage by the Williams Lake Project.

As you travel the length of the rail trail south from Route 32 in Kingston, you will pass historic mines and kilns and two lakes on the Williams Lake property, cross the Rondout River over a majestic trestle, walk through misty bogs and quiet forests, and finally pass through horse and dairy farms and apple orchards

as you head through New Paltz and into Gardiner. You'll have some magnificent views of the Shawangunk Mountains on your right (West) as you go. We hope you find an opportunity to explore all of this beautiful rail trail, whether on foot, bike, horseback or skis!

We are still making a few improvements to the trestle, notably tackling the erosion needs at the south end, and building a connector trail that will allow pedestrians a safe and more scenic access into the town of Rosendale. And we continue working on improving the rail trail in Rosendale and Ulster, so expect to see more work projects throughout the coming year. If you would like to donate to the continuing work on the rail trail, you can give at www.wallkillvalleylt.org. If you would like to learn more about the existing Wallkill Valley Rail Trail or become a trail steward, visit our sister not-for-profit the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Associations' website at www.WVRTA.org.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR TRESTLE DECKING VOLUNTEERS!

		Bill Munzer
Robert Allen	August Finn	Brian Nelson
Amber Alliger	Joshua Finn	David Nightingale
Jordan Arnold	Eric Flavin	Laurel Okorofsky
Tim Arnold	Eric Fye	Stuart Okorofsky
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COWS DON'T GO TO SCHOOL

Conserving farms, fields and forests saves us tax dollars. In fact, these open spaces actually subsidize residential and commercial tax payers. How? Cows, crops, trees and fields do not require more schools, police, ambulances, pensions, lights, streets, sewers or other tax supported services.

According to the current Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, farms and open space "support Ulster towns' financial balances." Our residential lands cost \$1.11 to service for every dollar of taxes collected – a net LOSS. Farms and open space cost only \$0.34 cents for every dollar of taxes collected - generating more taxes than they consume.

The lower public services cost for farms and open space saves our tax payers money rather than raising your taxes. Yes, undeveloped lands generate less total tax revenue per acre but they also demand much less tax expenditures - for a net gain to tax payers.

These tax benefits apply to working farms as well as lands with agricultural and conservation easements because they all remain on the tax rolls. For property owned directly by tax exempt groups such as government, religious, educational and environmental organizations,

these conditions may not apply. However, many of these tax exempt land holdings provide economic and social benefits that enhance our communities and result in employment, sales and other taxable activities.

The net tax savings are just one reason we need to conserve more lands with easements to balance residential and commercial development. Farms, wetlands and forests are crucial to preserving our precious quality of life, increasing our water and air quality and reducing the risks of flooding. Open space provides us all with the scenic views, local foods, wildlife and outdoor recreation that make living here so special.

So why don't all our politicians explain this and voters more vigorously support conserving farms and open space? Well, people don't know the facts - and cows and trees don't vote.

But you can make a difference by becoming a member of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust.

Chris Bernabo
President
Wallkill Valley Land Trust

COMING SOON:

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE WALLKILL VALLEY LAND TRUST!

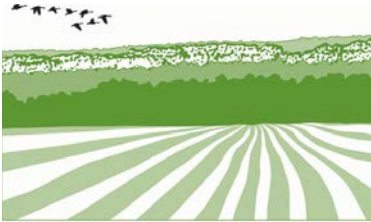
In early December, the Wallkill Valley Land Trust will inaugurate our first membership program in our 26-year history. Through membership, you will be offered exciting new opportunities to engage with the Land Trust. By becoming a member you will enable us to work together with our friends and benefactors in support of our mission.

Look for details in the mail or email soon and join us, knowing that you are active in preserving the natural beauty of Southern Ulster County. As a membership community we can and will build a better environment for the good health, welfare, and enjoyment of all.

DONORS TO THE WALLKILL VALLEY LAND TRUST

MANY thanks to all of our donors. The list below includes donations received March 15, 2013 through October 25, 2013. We make every effort to keep our records accurate. If there are mistakes or omissions, please bring them to our attention so that we may both apologize and correct them.

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A REWARDING AWARDS EVENT

On a beautiful autumn Sunday afternoon, the Wallkill Valley Land Trust had the honor to recognize Joan Burroughs for her outstanding work in conservation.

Joan is the manager of the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary in West Park and Treasurer of the John Burroughs Association Board. She recently spearheaded expansion of the trails at the sanctuary with state and private funding.

The sanctuary surrounds John Burroughs famed retreat "Slabsides" where he wrote and received visitors. He was one of the founders of the conservation movement in the early 1900s and an inspirational nature writer whose literary works are still relevant today. Joan is the great granddaughter of John Burroughs.

At the ceremony, Joan also received Certificates of Merit from both the NY State Assembly by Kevin Cahill and the NY State Senate by John Bonacic. We all are grateful for Joan continuing the Burroughs' legacy of caring for the earth.

Wallkill Valley Land Trust's annual Conservation Award Ceremony was created to honor those in the local community who have demonstrated their commitment to conserving open space in southern Ulster County. This year's event on October 20th drew a crowd of about 70 people. We thank the many volunteers and businesses that helped to make this a wonderful occasion by contributing their time, drinks and food.

Our special appreciation goes to hosts Rob and Iza Hare for sharing their lovely home and breathtaking easement lands in Esopus. We all will remember Joan's inspirational remarks about the enduring value of conserving land and the role of volunteers.

