



CONSERVANCY NEWS

Fall/Winter 2011

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Walter Levy Retires as RELC's President

Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy hosted a celebration in September to honor Walter Levy upon his retirement as the Conservancy's president. Walter, who has served on the Conservancy's Board since 2003 and as its president since 2006, oversaw a period of significant change in the organization's local presence. During his tenure, the Conservancy added four new conservation easements, permanently protecting more than 150 acres of open land from development.



Photo: Peter Nelson

Walter Levy

Significantly, Walter also worked extremely hard to update the Conservancy's operating practices to ensure the organization's future sustainability and recruited a new team of volunteers and board members. Walter first became involved with RELC when he and his wife Gene bought a home that had a RELC conservation easement covering the woodlands on the property.

"Walter has worked tirelessly for the past eight years to strengthen RELC's finances and to build a firm foundation for future growth," said Robert Anderberg, general counsel of Open Space Institute and RELC board member. "It's been a pleasure working with him." Walter has been succeeded as president by Robert Rominger, a resident of Accord.

All of us at RELC extend our thanks to Walter and wish him well in enjoying his newly-found free time.



A RELC Conservation Easement along the D&H Canal Tow Path in Accord

Photo: Peter Nelson

Rob Rominger, RELC's new president

Rob Rominger took over as RELC's president in September. Rob has been active in advocating for the preservation of farmland in Accord and the Rondout Valley and played an important role in the preservation of Domino Farm, a 149-acre working dairy farm in Accord.

"I think the Rondout Valley is a natural gem, with amazing vistas that, for the most part, are the same as they were 100 or more years ago. It's important that we preserve these areas and the farmland that comprises them while it's still possible. Farming is an important component in our local economy and perpetual farmland protection is a top priority," Rominger said.

He and his wife, Eileen (a Hurley native), are long time RELC supporters and Rob has served as a member of RELC's board since 2008. They reside in Accord in a 210-year old farmhouse.



Rob Rominger

RELC to Seek National Accreditation

RELC is in the process of applying to receive accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Accreditation will not only strengthen RELC's operating practices to further secure its long-term sustainability as a local land conservation organization, but it also will assure the public that it operates in conformity with national quality standards adopted by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how RELC complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full set of standards, see www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices.

To learn more about the accreditation program or to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission; Attn.: Public Comments; 112 Spring Street, Suite 204; Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 (fax 518-587-3181). Comments on RELC's application will be most useful by May 20, 2012.

Big Gains in Voluntary Land Conservation

The first census of land trusts in five years found 10 million new acres conserved nationwide since 2005, including 973,807 acres in New York State. The National Land Trust Census, released by the Land Trust Alliance, shows that voluntarily protected land increased 27 percent between 2005 and 2010. This is an 88% increase in acres conserved since 2005 and ranks New York sixth in the nation and second in the Northeast. The census is online at www.lta.org/census. A total of 47 million acres—an area over twice the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States—are now protected by land trusts. A greater percentage of the new acreage comes through local land trusts like RELC.

"New York residents value their land, and we are conserving it at the community level," said Rob Rominger, RELC's president. "Here in New York, we are investing in our future with land trusts that ensure clean water, local food and places to play for our children and for generations to come." Since RELC was founded in 1988, we have permanently protected about 3,200 acres.

An enhanced tax deduction for conservation easement donations has helped America's land trusts work with farmers, ranchers and other modest-income landowners to sustain a remarkable pace of more than one million acres protected by conservation easements each year. But if Congress allows this incentive to expire at the end of 2011, fewer landowners will receive tax benefits from the generous donation of development rights on their land.

RELC thanks Rep. Maurice Hinchey and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand for being among the 262 House and 11 Senate cosponsors of H.R. 1964/S. 339, bills to make this important conservation tax incentive permanent. That's more cosponsors than any other tax bill in Congress!

There are now 97 land trusts operating in New York, including 13 that have received national accreditation. The preservation of family farms and ranchlands is now a priority for 61% of land trusts, up from 21% that listed farmland as the top priority in 2005.

The Land Trust Alliance is a national conservation organization that works to save the places people love. LTA increases the pace of conservation, so more land and natural resources get protected. It enhances the quality of conservation, so the most important lands get protected using the best practices in the business. And LTA ensures the permanence of conservation by creating the laws and resources needed to defend protected land over time. The Land Trust Alliance is based in Washington, D.C.

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Working with landowners to preserve special open places

Two Invasive Insects from Asia Threaten Eastern Forests

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and the Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB) have found their way from Asia to North America in recent years. These two insects appear to have the potential to drastically alter the character of eastern forests by potentially killing all or most of the ash trees and maple trees. There is no known way to eradicate these insects once they have infested a large area.



Background on Emerald Ash Borer

The EAB is a small, green beetle that belongs to a large family of beetles known as the buprestids, or metallic wood boring beetles. The description is apt, as many of the buprestids appear as if their wing covers are made of polished metal. The adult EAB has green, iridescent wing covers and is approximately one-half inch in length. It is a good flyer and is likely to be in treetops eating leaves; it might be too small to see from the ground. Tree symptoms are a better indicator. Trees generally die within three years. If the bark is loose, pull it off and look for “galleries” or tunnels on the woods’ surface. If a gallery is less and one-eighth of an inch wide, it might be from the EAB. If it is wider than it is possibly from an EAB.

The EAB is an insect that is not native to North America. It was first found in 2002 in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario. It is presumed to have arrived several years earlier on woody packaging materials. It is now known to be found in 12 states and was discovered in Saugerties, NY in July 2010. EABs feed strictly on ash trees. The larvae feed just beneath the bark on the inside of the trees, while the adults feed on leaves.



Background on Asian Long-Horned Beetle

The ALB was first discovered attacking trees in the United States in New York City in 1996. ALB probably travelled to the United States inside solid wood packing material from China. The beetle has been intercepted at ports of entry and found in warehouses in various locations around the United States. In August 2008, the presence of ALB was confirmed in Worcester, Massachusetts.

The ALB primarily attacks maple trees. It is not a great flyer and may be seen on the tree trunk, low-hanging branches, or on the ground. Note the white spots on the mostly black body. Currently the only effective way to eradicate ALB is to remove infested trees and destroy them by chipping or burning. To prevent further spread of the insect, quarantines are established to regulate movement of articles that could carry life stages of the pest including all firewood. Early detection of infestations and rapid response are crucial to successful eradication of the beetle.

Ways to Prevent the Spread of ALB and EAB

- Please do not transport firewood. EAB and ALB can be inadvertently transported in untreated firewood and other forest products.
- Buy firewood locally, burn all firewood at your campsite before you leave, and never bring firewood home.
- For those who use firewood to heat their homes, your firewood should be from only a few miles away or at least in the same county. Suspected outbreaks should be reported to the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation at 866-640-0652, for more information visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6986.html

Welcome New Board Member: Richard Travers

Richard Travers was elected to RELC’s board this summer. Richard is CEO of Travers, O’Keefe, an insurance brokerage and consulting firm with offices in Accord, Manhattan, and Saratoga Springs. Richard has resided Rondout Valley since 1982 with his partner Sherryl. Richard is also the President of the Rondout Valley Business Association (RVBA) whose focus is the enhancement of the economic and social opportunities of those who work and live in, and those who visit, the Rondout Valley. He is a leader in the creation of a continuous rail trail through the Rondout Valley. Richard is a Lifetime Member of the Mohonk Preserve. His many interests include fly-fishing, and snowshoeing with a secret passion for cooking and entertaining.

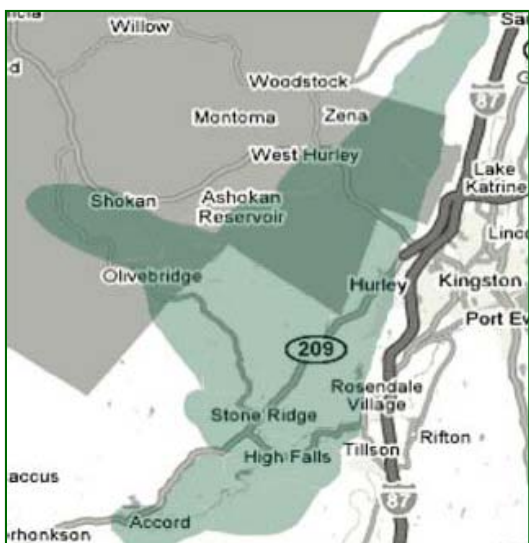
New Conservation Easement in the Works

RELC is working with Accord residents Hans Fetscherin and Lexanne Hamilton on a new 5-acre conservation easement near Lang Road in Accord. The property is adjacent to existing RELC easements covering approximately 60-acres. The new easement increases the land RELC protects in the sensitive Vly Brook watershed and is contiguous to property under conservation easement owned by the couple. The land is adjacent to one of RELC’s first conservation easements and was originally donated to RELC by Accord resident Nancy Copley (and one of RELC’s founders) in 1988.

“One goal of our strategic growth plan is adding property that is next to our existing protected lands,” said RELC president Rob Rominger. “This new easement adds to the positive impact of our efforts in the Vly Brook area.”

Geographic Area of Concentration

RELC accepts conservation easements in Ulster County, NY. At present, there are easement agreements for 41 properties (about 3,200 acres) distributed in Accord, Esopus, High Falls, Hurley, Marbletown, Olivebridge, Rosendale, Saugerties, Stone Ridge, and West Shokan. These lands are privately owned and fully taxable, according to town, county, and school district regulations.



Mission & Goals

RELC’s mission is to educate the public about land conservation and work with private land owners who want to protect their land through their donation of a conservation easement. The aim of each conservation easement is to protect and preserve natural resources and open space while sustaining the scenic beauty and rural character. RELC’s easements protect bio-diversity and ecosystems. In keeping with RELC’s commitment to future generations, each conservation easement is monitored annually in perpetuity.

“Fostering an increased appreciation and understanding of our area’s agricultural lands, forests, fields and water resources and unique attributes.”

Affiliations

RELC is a member of the Land Trust Alliance (www.lta.org). We have adopted and follow LTA’s National Standards and Practices.

Cooperating with:

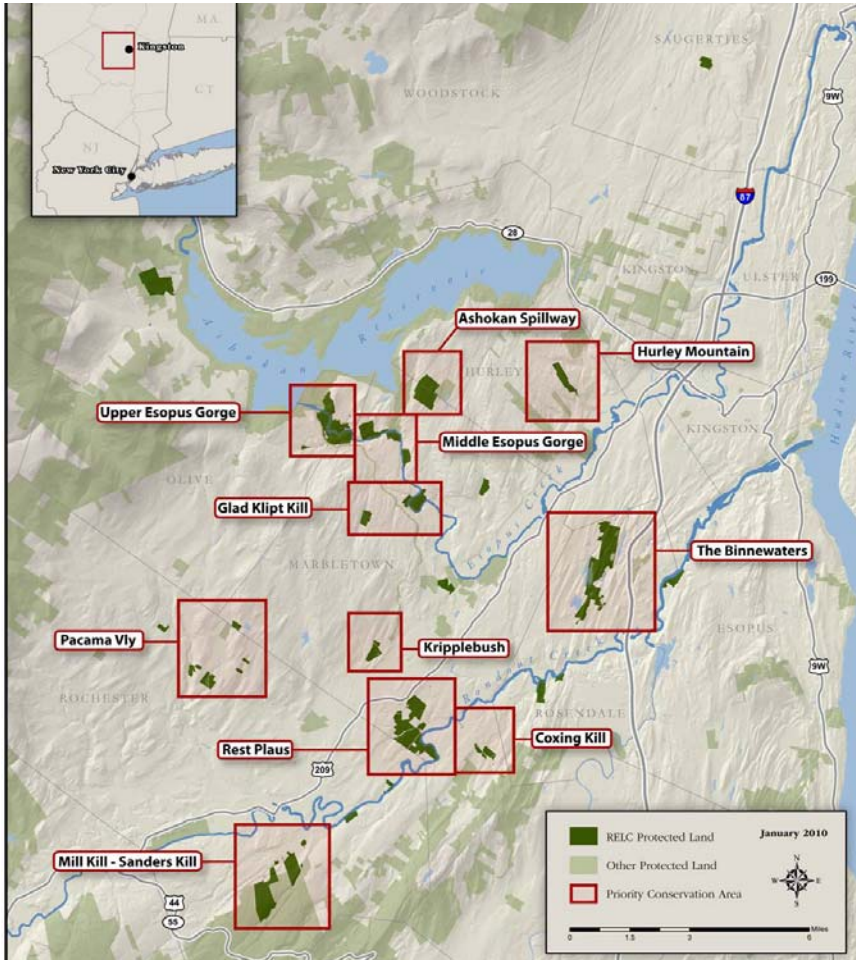
- Consortium of Local Land Trusts of Ulster County.
- Open Space Institute
- The Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York City Department of Environmental Protection
- Local municipalities.

Encouragement for Contribution and Participation

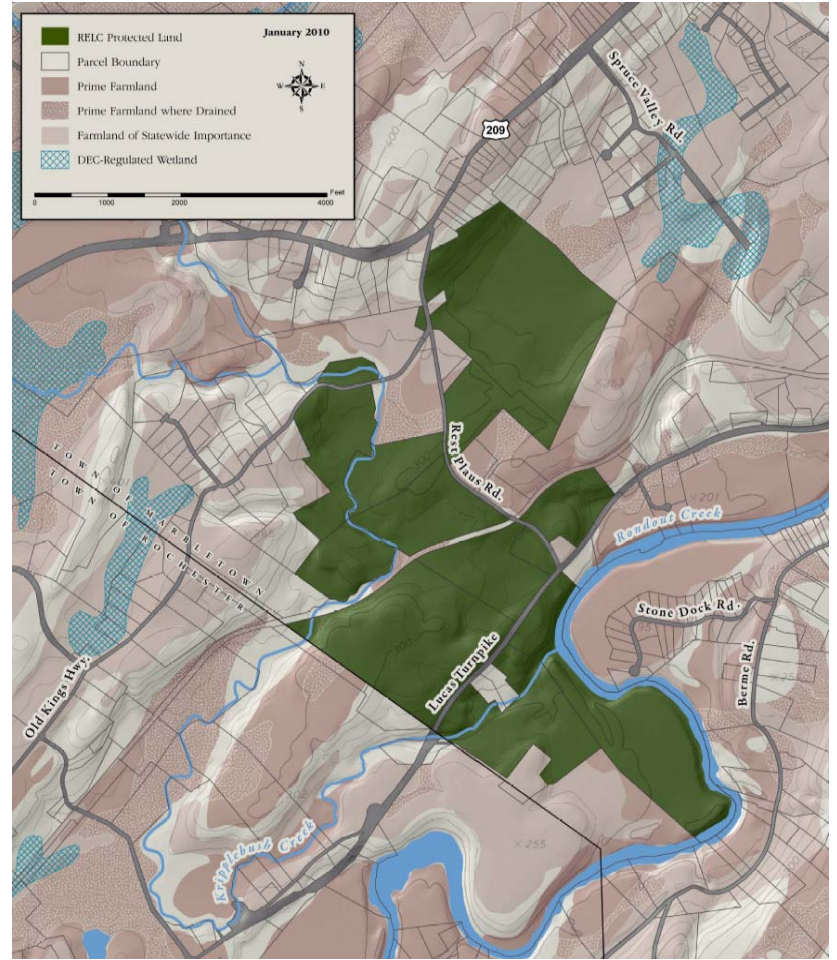
RELC is a voluntary organization. It Depends on volunteer participation and financial contributions to make it effective and sustainable.



Photo credit: Jonathan Blair



A map of our conservation easement locations



Rest Plaus Historic District, Marbletown

What is a Land Conservancy?

A land conservancy, or land trust, is a local non-profit organization dedicated to the permanent preservation of open space lands such as agricultural, forest, watershed, and other natural and scenic land. The 1,500 or so land trusts in the United States share a common commitment to using voluntary initiatives in the protection of undeveloped lands and work directly with private landowners by offering tools such as conservation easements, some of which permit agricultural business activity and limited development. RELC generally concentrates west of the Shawangunks and south of Route 28 in Ulster County.

RELC's Conservation Properties

These maps show the properties that the Conservancy has protected in perpetuity. If you would like to discuss preserving your land, please call Rob Rominger 845-626-7174 or email: info@RELandConservancy.org

Thank you Josh Clague for preparing these maps.

What is a Conservation Easement?

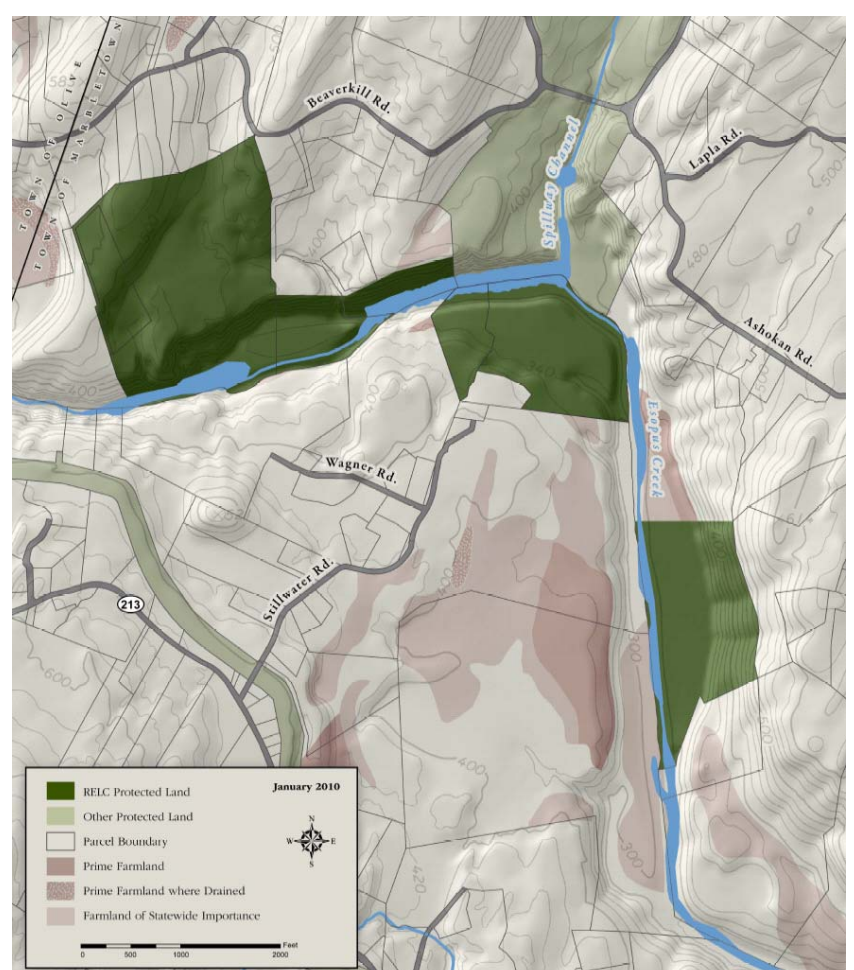
A conservation easement is given in perpetuity and runs with the title to the property. It is donated to the land trust, which monitors the property periodically and can legally enforce the easement terms. In many cases, the donation of a conservation easement can provide significant federal and state income tax deduction. Conservation easements can also provide an efficient way to reduce costly estate taxes on family lands. RELC can work with individual landowners to develop long-term plans for the preservation and development of a property in a way that maintains the property's value while preserving its character. We can also work with groups of landowners to protect and enhance areas so that neighbors collectively determine the future of their area.

A land trust operates solely in the private sector working directly with private property owners. The backbone of private land preservation is the "conservation easement," which is a legally binding, voluntary agreement between a land owner and a land trust. This agreement protects the land from future haphazard development by specifying where development can take place (if future development is desired). In this way, natural and scenic features of a property can be preserved while a reasonable amount of development can occur on the part of the property that has the least natural and scenic value.

To learn more, visit our website, www.RELandConservancy.org



Upper Esopus Gorge



Middle Esopus Gorge



CONSERVANCY NEWS

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Photo: Stefan Lisowsky

Hiking in the Levy/Moncrief Easement, Accord

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