



CONSERVANCY NEWS

Spring/Summer 2011

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www.RELandConservancy.org

RELC is keeping an eye on the Lower Esopus

There has been considerable public discussion regarding the discharge of water from New York City's Ashokan Reservoir into the Esopus Creek. RELC protects five separate parcels along the waterway that have been directly impacted by this discharge and has been following the situation with keen interest.

The quantities of water discharged recently appear to be higher than in previous years. In addition, residents have indicated that there have been higher levels of clay and other suspended solids, some of which have been deposited downstream creating new shoals and, in some areas, altering the stream channel.

Property owners and local government officials have been in discussions with the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection and the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation to find mutually acceptable solutions to mitigate potential adverse impacts on aquatic life and residents.

RELC has been monitoring this situation closely and intends to continue to press for the protection of the stream frontage on its conservation lands.



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Rosendale Rail Trestle from Joppenburgh Mountain

(photo by Greg Miller, OSI)

Happy 100th Birthday Trudy Suepfle!

Gertrude Suepfle of Stone Ridge celebrated her 100th birthday in May. Mrs. Suepfle and her late husband, Willie, came to the U.S. from Germany in 1930. A job promised to Willie didn't materialize and they instead answered an advertisement for a "couples" job at a large stone house on Hurley Mountain Road in Lamontville.

Mrs. Suepfle soon became homesick and the couple returned to Germany in 1933 but were warned by her grandfather upon their return to leave Germany due to Hitler's rise. The couple returned to Ulster County and worked in Kingston and Highland and bought a pre-Civil War house on Peak Road in 1935. Willie eventually started a lumber business across from the house and they spent time working in a greenhouse that he had built, raising flowering cactus and orchids. "We so loved to dance and we so loved to swim," Mrs. Suepfle told the Blue Stone Press in 2010. "The property had one pond and Willie added eight more and we swam whenever we could. We had parties here and everyone swam. We had 75 dances here and I baked and cooked and dance. We had a wonderful life."

Willie passed away in 1987 in the home he loved and Mrs. Suepfle remains there actively keeping watch over the ponds and visiting with friends. "I danced up until I was 93 and I still hear the music and love the music," Mrs. Suepfle said, "Willie was my very best friend and I still dance with him in my heart."

In order to permanently preserve the land surrounding her beloved Meadow Brook Farm, Mrs. Suepfle donated a 49.5-acre conservation easement to RELC in 1991.



Gertrude Suepfle

(photo by Blue Stone Press)

RELC to Seek LTA Accreditation

RELC has applied to obtain accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). Fewer than 10% of all land trusts in the United States have received this distinction. In order to qualify for accreditation, RELC is required to develop and adhere to policies relating to a variety of management subjects ranging from conservation easement acquisition and maintenance to financial and corporate governance procedures.

"RELC has worked hard over the past couple of years to progress to the point where we can be considered for LTA accreditation. We have completed approximately 40 new baseline reports on our various conservation easement properties, visited each property annually, set aside funds for future easement defense and monitoring expenses, and educated our board members and volunteers about LTA's best practices," said Zali Win, RELC's Secretary and Treasurer. "LTA accreditation will help ensure the sustainability of our organization for the future, enable us to meet the responsibilities we've undertaken and assure the public of the integrity of our operations."

RELC Announces Rail Trail Support

RELC has recently committed to support the expansion of rail trail projects in the towns of Rochester, Rosendale, and Warwarsing through its partnership with three local organizations. "Rail trails benefit the public by providing enjoyable recreational opportunities for residents and visitors as well as an increase in economic activity for local businesses and the community in general," said Walter Levy, RELC's president. "We are excited by the prospect of one day enjoying long, uninterrupted rail trails as well as our ability to help our partners leverage the work they have already done." RELC is supporting rail trail expansion by providing grants to Wallkill Valley Land Trust/Open Space Institute, the Rondout Valley Business Association, and Friends of Historic Kerhonkson.

Wallkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT)/ Open Space Institute (OSI)

RELC is providing a \$25,000 dollar-for-dollar challenge grant to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Trestle Project, a joint project of WVLT and OSI. The project will restore Rosendale's 114-year old rail trestle and add it to an expanded rail trail that will run from Wallkill to Kingston. This expansion means that trail users can take the scenic route to pass by woodlands, open fields, and farmland as they pass between many scenic and historic hamlets.

Residents and tourist alike can bike, walk, run, horseback ride and cross country ski while they discover a wide variety of birds, other wildlife and the panoramically beautiful views of the Shawangunk Ridge as they ride 150 feet above the Rondout Creek across the 940-foot long bridge. The project will include repairing the bridge's steel infrastructure, installing decks and railings, and regrading and widening the rest of the Rail Trail. RELC is particularly interested in the expansion of the rail trail near its existing 426-acre conservation easement near Williams Lake. This linear park will benefit Mid-Hudson Valley residents in many ways. It will fill in the most important "missing link" in one of the best networks of rail trails in the Hudson River Valley, and will encourage new economic development in the town of Rosendale.

In short, the restored Rosendale/ Ulster extension of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail will be a recreational and cultural resource that will provide users with an unparalleled recreational experience. For more information on the Trestle Project, visit: www.wallkillvalleylt.org
(continued on page 2)

Save the Date
RELC Annual Meeting
Saturday, September 10
3:00 pm
Creek Road, Allgerville
All are welcome!

Working with landowners to preserve special open places

Rail Trail Support, continued

Rondout Valley Business Association's Rail Trail Initiative

RELC is providing a \$1,000 dollar-for-dollar challenge grant to the RVBA's Rondout Valley Rail Trail Initiative (RTI). The grant is to assist in the RTI's initial plan development and fundraising efforts as it seeks to develop plans to expand the rail trail in the towns of Marbletown, Rochester, Wawarsing and the Village of Ellenville.

"We are expanding the length of the rail trail through the Rondout Valley towns and villages, connecting the existing and proposed trails that will ultimately provide an uninterrupted path from Kingston south through Ellenville and onwards to Sullivan County. This will bring tourism and economic activity, which is definitely needed in our community," said Richard Travers, RVBA's president. For more information on the RVBA, visit: www.RondoutValley.org

Friends of Historic Kerhonkson

RELC has provided a \$500 grant to FHK to assist in its volunteer activities to expand the rail trail from Main Street in Kerhonkson south to Ellenville. While the Town of Wawarsing is funding a substantial portion of the expansion along with State transportation grants, FHK has been instrumental in providing volunteer labor and services for clearing paths and cleaning up the rail bed. RELC's grant will provide financial support to assist FHK in those efforts.



Map of Rondout Valley and Walkkill Valley Rail Trail Initiatives

Tow Path Run

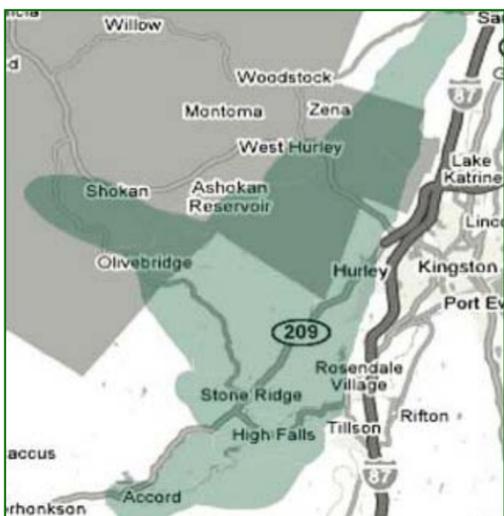
On Sunday, October 2nd, runners and walkers of all ages will participate in the annual rail trail run to raise money for Accord's Little Ones Learning Center. The 6 kilometer walk/run will follow the historic D&H Canal Tow Path from RELC's headquarters in Alligerville to the Community Center in Accord.

The Conservancy will welcome runners and their fans in its headquarters building in Alligerville. Little Ones Learning Center, with a library of more than 3,000 titles in its facilities at the Rochester Reformed Church on Route 209 in Accord, provides free early childhood literacy programs to children ages 1-6. Registration 7:30 to 8:30 am, 9:00 departure for walkers, 9:15 for runners.

www.LittleOnesLearningCenter.org or 845-626-7249

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:

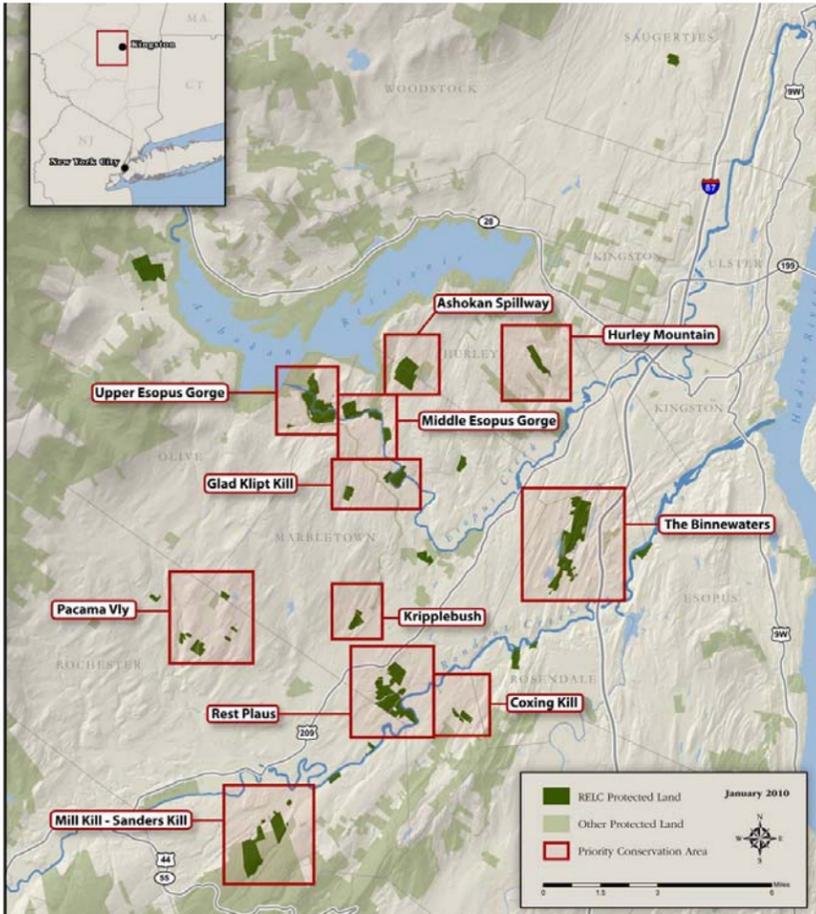
- Consortium of Local Land Trusts of Ulster County.
- Open Space Institute
- The Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York City Department of Environmental Protection
- Local municipalities.

Encouragement for Contribution and Participation

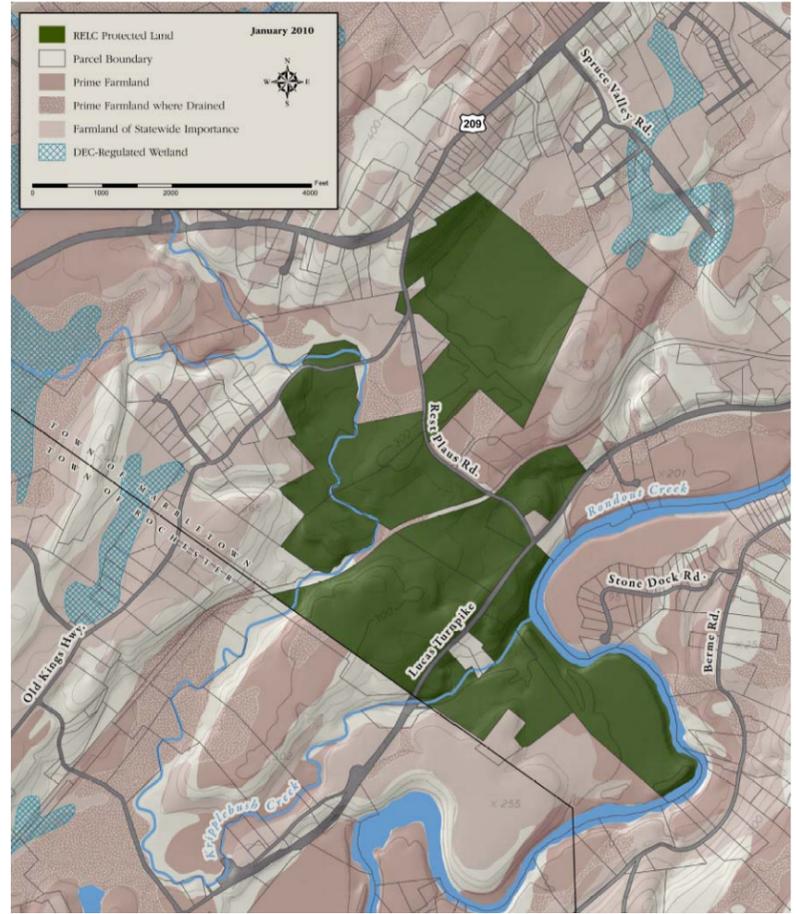
RELC is a voluntary organization. It depends on volunteer participation and financial contributions to make it effective and sustainable.



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 Walter Levy at 845-626-3140 or email: info@RELandConservancy.org

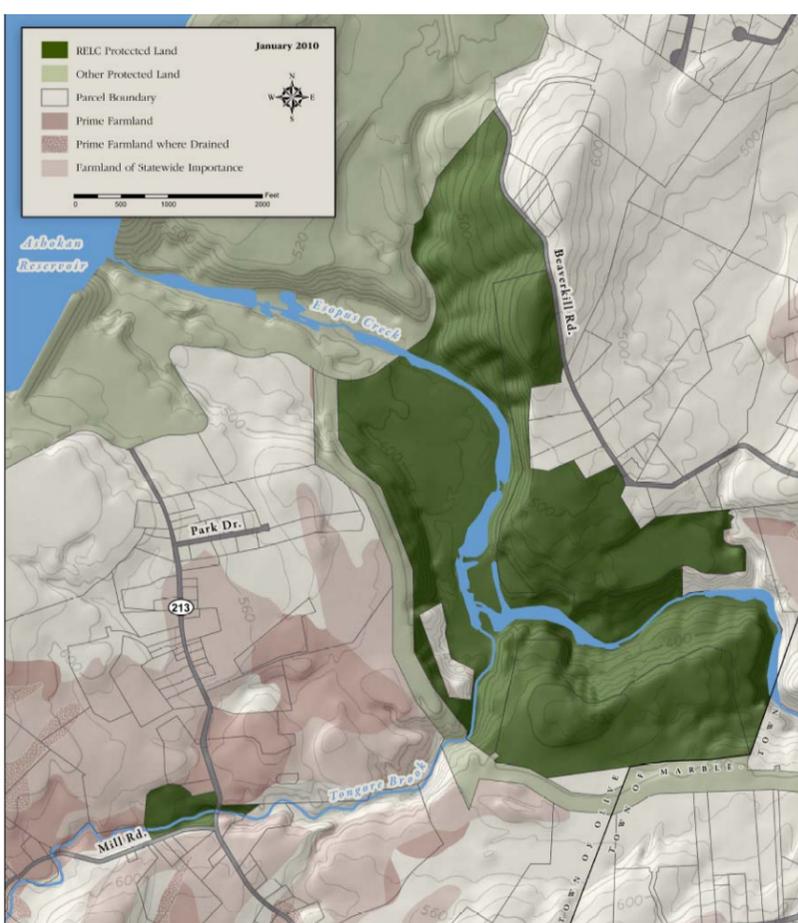
Thank you Josh Clague for preparing these maps.

What is a Conservation Easement?

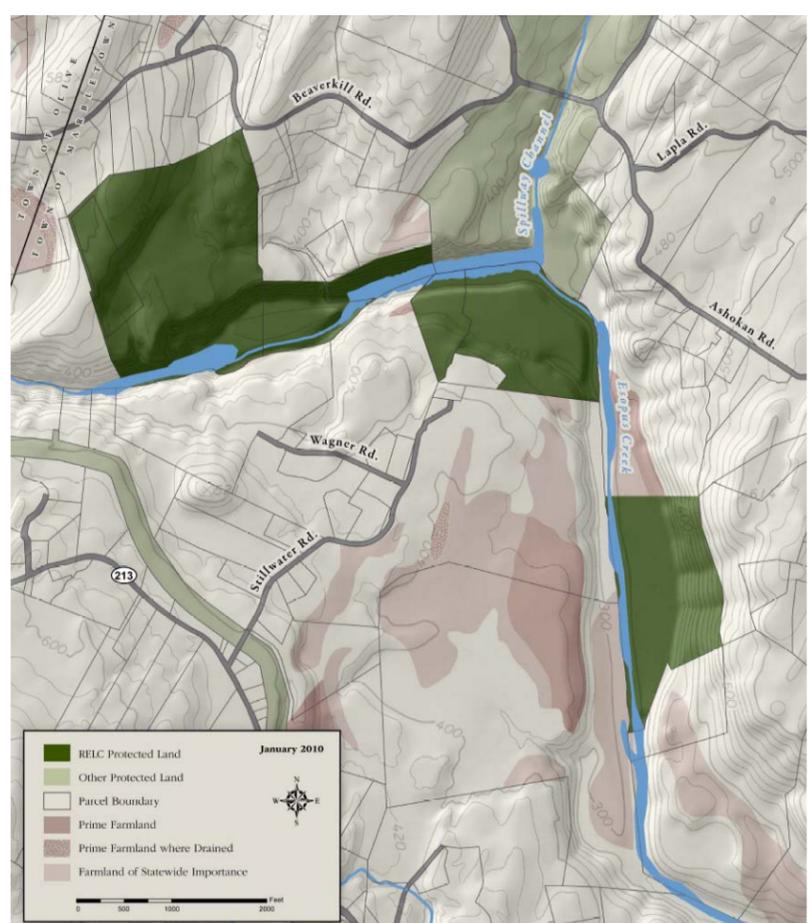
A conservation easement is given in perpetuity and runs with the title to the property. It is donated to the land trust, which monitors the property periodically and can legally enforce the easement terms. In many cases, the donation of a conservation easement can provide significant federal and state 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

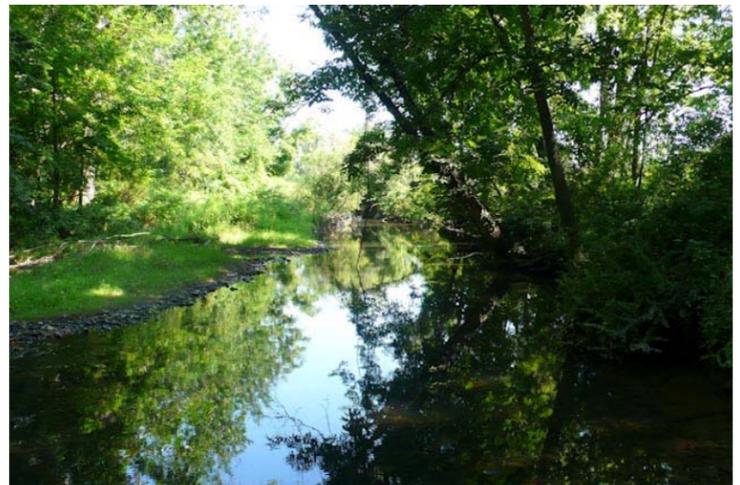
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Part of the Hales-Pskowski Easement

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