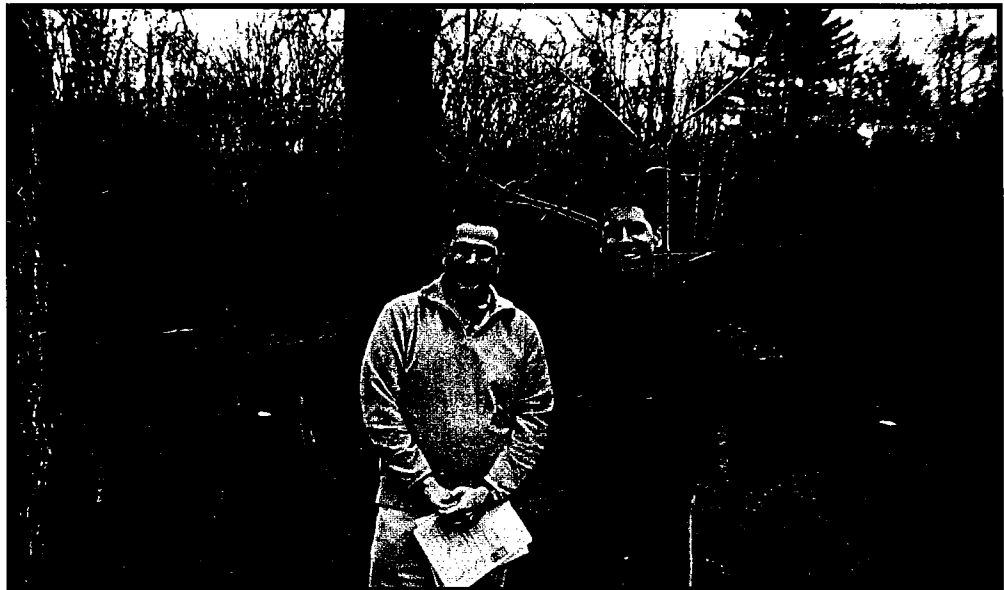




NEWS 2002

CONTENTS

- Schoonmaker Easement1
- First Hurely Easement2
- Easement Criteria3
- First Esopus Easement3
- Hird Easement4
- Outreach At Olivebridge ...5
- Great Tax Myths5
- Easements Protect Endangered Species6
- Abell Easement6
- Join Us!8



Frank Macagnone and Keith Eddleman at their new home on the Rondout Creek.

Schoonmaker Easement

Virginia Schoonmaker, one of the Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy's (RELC) first board members and longtime friend of our organization, recently placed an easement on a portion of her farm on the Rondout Creek in Alligerville. Virginia, who has always been a great believer in our mission, placed the easement prior to selling the property.

Virginia was born in a big handsome brick house on Route 209 that is now Sparrowhawk Bed and Breakfast. She later moved to the Rondout Creek farm.

Virginia served as Executive Director of the National Society to Prevent Blindness, was President and later a board member of the Benedictine Health Foundation, and throughout her life worked for blindness prevention. She was instrumental in bringing about glaucoma screening and designed and launched the first home eye test for pre-school children.

In May, 1997 Virginia gave the Conservancy our headquarters building, with the surrounding field. It is across the street from the farm property. Until the 1950's the building was the Alligerville Post Office. Virginia's father built the post office

in the early 30's and her mother was the post mistress during the 30's and early 40's.

Raised on a farm, Virginia has regretted the steady loss of farmland to development in Ulster County. To do her part to preserve farmland she worked with the Conservancy and the buyer's attorney to craft an easement that would be satisfactory to all.

In the end, the Conservancy took an easement on 20 out of 32 acres. The important issue for the Conservancy was to protect creek frontage and lands across the creek; the new owners wanted to exclude the house and immediately surrounding land. Again, the Conservancy worked with all parties to make the arrangement work for everyone.

The easement includes the field past the large barn to the east and all the property from the Alligerville Bridge on Kyserike Road to past Church Hill Road along Tow Path Road (Berme Road). The new easement protects approximately 1,778 feet of Rondout Creek frontage.

This easement is truly the gift that keeps on giving to all of us, and to all those who will be all of us. Thank you, Virginia.

“We would be naive to ignore the possibility of having to defend one of our easements.”

WISH LIST

Pro Bono Legal Services. Are you an attorney who can be on "standby" for an occasional question or to review an easement?

Dear Friends,

The past year has certainly been a busy one for us at RELC. We added several important and unique easements, continued our public outreach, had our Headquarters repaired and spruced up, and overall, have been very successful in furthering our mission. We all feel a sense of pride and accomplishment and we hope you, our supporters, do as well.

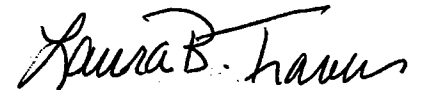
As we grow and accept more easements, this feeling of accomplishment is tempered by an ever increasing level of anxiety. This anxiety is brought about by realizing that as our easement properties change hands, the new owners may not have any sense of obligation to protect the open space and may not honor the easement they have inherited. Even owners who originally placed the easement, many years ago, may rethink their dedication—for various reasons.

Our annual operating budget is \$14,000. This newsletter goes out to over 500 households with 200 more newsletters going to area town offices, libraries and friendly retail stores. If 700 household gave \$50.00 each we could meet our operating costs and have \$21,000 go directly into our endowment account for easement enforcement. If every household gave \$100 we could put away \$56,000.

Legal defense is expensive. We would be naive to ignore the possibility of having to defend one of our easements. Our endowment funds are now being invested in CD's and although they are not the most lucrative investment vehicle, they are safe and always growing.

Please give generously to this yearly membership campaign and know that we are very careful with your money.

Sincerely,



First Hurley Easement

Muriel Smolen has given the Conservancy its first easement in Hurley. The 104 acre parcel sits at the end of Eagles Nest Road, aptly named, on the Hurley Ridge. The parcel is completely wooded with a variety of hard and soft woods, seasonal vernal pools and wetland. Chestnut oak is predominant at this elevation. A boulder field left by the ice age is evident in the low area.

Jack and Muriel came to Hurley from New York City in 1935 to live the country life surrounded by nature. They were shown a house and large parcel of land nestled in a small valley on Eagles Nest Road in Hurley. There they saw a peach tree laden with peaches, and two waterfalls. “We wanted that tree!” she said, and they bought the property. They cleared the sumac from the meadow, put in electricity and converted the barn to a workshop where Jack ground precision filters and telescope lenses. It took eight years to electrify the house.

Muriel recalls the harsh winters and deep snowfalls when she and Jack would hike down to Hurley with a pillowcase and buy groceries at the Post Office. Jack was a volunteer fireman during the early 50's and helped rescue people in a rowboat in the flood of 1952. Jack built an observatory, choosing a high point in the yard. Unfortunately, as the lights of Kingston increased, viewing the night sky became more difficult. They also saw the growth of housing developments to the east such as Elmendorf Tract, Rolling Meadows and Russell Road consume much of Hurley's open space above the flood plain corn fields. The loss of so many of the area's fields and forests led Muriel to donate a conservation easement on her land. “I want to preserve this land”, she said, “Everything is disappearing.”

Open space is a finite resource. We hope that this parcel will be the first of many open spaces protected along the Hurley Ridge. Thank you Muriel, for your forethought.

Easement Criteria

How do we decide that a property is worth the long term investment that RELC must make? At least five of the following criteria must apply for the Conservancy to consider accepting an easement:

- 1) The property is in, or capable of, active agricultural or forestry use.
- 2) The property buffers agricultural land, wetlands, wildlife habitats, or otherwise sensitive natural areas.
- 3) The property includes important wildlife habitats and/or known migration routes.
- 4) The property is in a relatively natural undisturbed condition.
- 5) The property is visible by the public from roadways, waterways or recreation areas.
- 6) The property shares a common boundary with publicly or privately preserved land or other significant open space areas.
- 7) The property is in close proximity to private land which is already preserved or likely to be permanently protected.
- 8) The development of the property would diminish scenic views or interfere with views across protected open space.
- 9) The property affects the integrity of a significant watershed area, creek, pond, wetland, river, other body of water or aquifer.
- 10) The property is of sufficient size that its significant features are likely to remain intact in spite of adjacent development.
- 11) Public access will be permitted for education or recreation on the property.
- 12) The easement would set an important precedent for restricting land in an area of interest to the Conservancy.
- 13) The property is of significant historic landscape value.



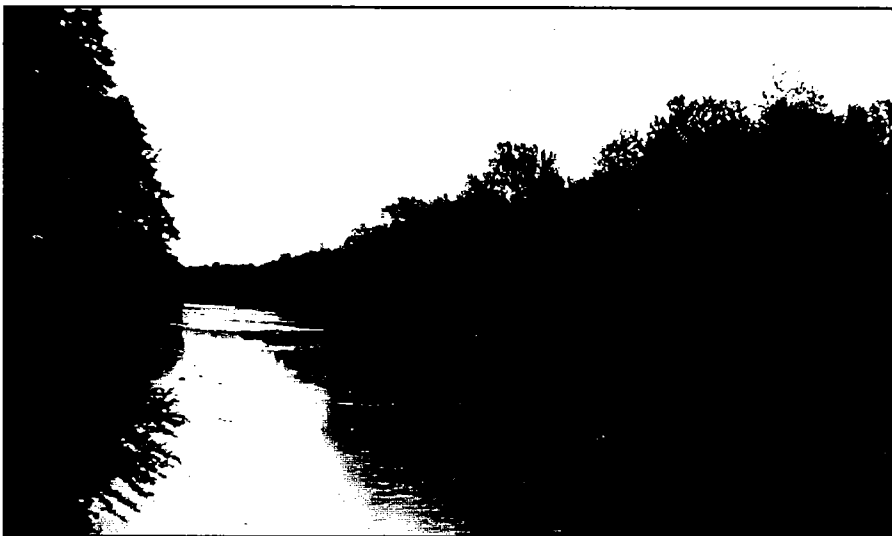
Suggestions?

If you have a story, an opinion, or a suggestion about an easement or our work in general, please let us know.

First Town of Esopus Easement

On June 19th the Conservancy filed an easement on sixty acres belonging to Floyd Glinert. Floyd and his wife Phyllis live in an historic stone house on Van Wagner Road in the Town of Esopus. The sixty acre parcel is linear and runs 3596 feet along the Rondout Creek.

Laura Travers and Jay Bloomfield worked with Floyd (and Floyd worked with his family) to craft an easement that was in both of our best interests. As always, RELC's goal is to work with landowners and come up with an easement that satisfies both parties needs. Thank you, Floyd, for you and your family's commitment to our mission and for being generous and caring individuals.



Glinert easement Rondout Creek Frontage.

Painting Headquarters

Board member Alex Embree spearheaded an extensive refurbishing of our Headquarters in Allgerville. Inmates from the Ulster County Jail who volunteered for the Voluntary Work Program, supervised by Correction Officer Vince Decker did a fantastic job.

They began by trimming all the bushes around the building and

removing the brush. While preparing to paint the outside of the building, they found structural damage which left unrepaired could have resulted in great loss. This was repaired. Gutters were removed, painted and rehung and a new door with hardware was framed and installed.

Continued on page 4

Hird Easement

On May 7, 2002 Martin Hird signed an easement for approximately 9 acres on the Tongorekill Creek aka Tongore Brook at the intersection of Route 213 and Mill Road in Olivebridge. Laura Travers and Scott Abrahamson worked with Martin first to determine his boundary lines and then craft an easement that would suit both our needs. The Conservancy wanted to protect the Creek frontage which visually contributes significantly to the rural quality of the area and is appreciated by those traveling on Route 213 and Mill Road.

The Creek terminates downstream at the SUNY New Paltz Campus lake which flows into the Esopus Creek. (The Conservancy holds a 66 acre easement where water from the lake joins the Esopus Creek.)

Martin wanted to protect creek frontage but wanted to reserve an area of a few acres behind his house for possible future use. Since there was creek frontage behind his house he granted us a 75 foot creek buffer.

The Conservancy thanks Martin for his foresight.

We invite you to express your opinion about anything we do. We work for you and need to know what you think. Please send letters to: Laura Travers, 4243 Route 28A, West Shokan, NY 12494



Board Members Needed

Because of the Conservancy's growing success and presence in the County, our need for Directors is increasing. (Every new easement requires a monitor; every new idea requires thought and planning to carry out.) Also, as Director's terms end, our Bylaws require that that seat be filled. So you can see that the future continuance of the Conservancy depends on you.

Now, more than ever, we need you to step forward and offer to serve on our Board of Directors. The only requirements are to believe in our mission, be open and thoughtful and to be able to attend one Board meeting a month. (Generally our Board meetings take a holiday from November to March.)

I know that most of you support us with your financial gifts and for this we are very grateful. We must however ask you to go one step further and support us with some of your time. I know that everyone has a different amount of time and energy to give. We all must make choices. That is why the tasks are varied and can be suited to each Director's interests and available time. We all do what we can, at our own pace, according to our work and family obligations.

Please think about this and act now. For more information and to be a guest at one of our future meetings, call Laura Travers at (845) 657-8303.

August 4, 2002
Laura Travers
Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy

Dear Laura,
We were very pleased to hear that the Hird family had taken an easement on their land, arranged through the hard work of the Land Conservancy. As neighbors who live across the Tongore Creek from the Hird land, we will benefit immeasurably and will feel secure in the years to come knowing that the land we look at and enjoy every day will be protected.

With open space fast disappearing, we wish to express our gratitude to you and to the Hird's for making sure that at least some of this beautiful planet will remain wild forever. We will happily continue to support the Land Conservancy in its work.

Thank you so much.

Best wishes,
Sarah Plant and Zachary Sklar, Olivebridge, NY

Painting HQ *continued from page 3*

Inside they plastered and painted everything including window frames. A ceiling fan was installed. Last, but not least, they cleaned and polished our hardwood floor and vacuumed our rugs.

The Conservancy would first like to thank Alex for his amazing effort to keep the job moving forward. He arranged for the County to do the project, made sure all the supplies were there, brought the men lunches daily for two + weeks and handled all the details too numerous to mention! We also thank Sheriff Bockelmann for supporting this program, Vince Decker for managing it, and all the inmates who volunteered to do the work.

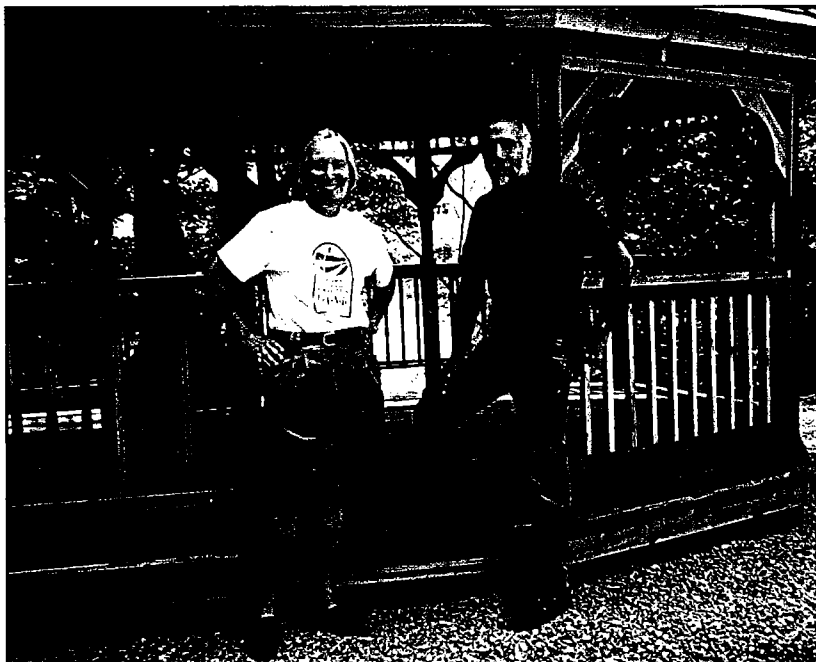
This program saved the Conservancy thousands of dollars and we are very grateful to all of you.

(Photo: RELC headquarters on Creek Road in Allgerville.)

We hope this newsletter speaks for the work we do. Please be generous when you return your enclosed yearly membership envelope. Thank You.

RELC Outreach At Olivebridge SUNY Campus

Through the generosity of the Thanksgiving Foundation, RELC has cooperated with SUNY-New Paltz's Ashokan Campus located on Beaverkill Road in Olivebridge in purchasing this 12 X 24 foot gazebo. Looking down over our 66 acre easement, the Esopus Creek, a covered bridge and an historic mill site, the gazebo will be the focal point of many activities at the Campus. Eventually it will house display boards about the easement, the site's history and other educational materials for use by the many adult and school groups that visit the Campus yearly. Hopefully, this will be the beginning of other educational initiatives at the site such as an interpretive trail and a school curriculum for visiting teachers. Want to visit? Call 657-8333.



Andy Angstrom and Laura Travers at the new 12' X 24' gazebo located at the SUNY-New Paltz Campus in Olivebridge.

The Great Tax Myths (Cows Don't go to School)

The myths goes like this: "If you take land off the tax rolls so it cannot be developed, you take badly needed tax revenue out of municipal coffers." or "Residential development will lower property taxes by increasing the tax base."

These statements, often used to oppose preservation of important tracts of land (or justify residential development), is just plain wrong. And there are studies to prove it. The American Farmland Trust has conducted more than 83 Cost of Community Services Studies around the country that show that owners of farm, forest and open lands pay more in local tax revenues than it costs local government to provide services to their properties. According to their studies, Commercial/ Industrial development uses \$.26 of every dollar raised for public services; Farms and Forests use \$.27 and Residential properties use \$1.10 worth of public services for every dollar it generates in tax revenue.

While it is true that an acre of land with a new house generates more total revenue than an acre of hay or corn, this tells us little about a community's fiscal stability. Farms, forest and other open lands may generate less revenue than residential, commercial or industrial properties, but they require little public infrastructure and few services.

Residential land use is a net drain on municipal coffers. It costs local governments more to provide services to homeowners than residential landowners pay in property taxes. In every community studied, farmland has generated a fiscal surplus to help offset the shortfall creat-

ed by residential demand for public services. This is true when the land is assessed at its current agricultural use.

Communities need reliable information to help them see the full picture of their land uses. COCS studies are an inexpensive way to evaluate the net contribution of farm and open lands. They can help local leaders discard the notion that natural resources must be converted to other uses to ensure fiscal stability. They also dispel the myths that differential assessment programs give landowners an unfair tax break and that farmland is just waiting around for development.

One type of land use is not intrinsically better than another, and COCS studies do not judge the overall public good or long-term merits of any land use or taxing structure. Communities must balance goals such as maintaining affordable housing, creating jobs and conserving land and resources. With good planning, these goals can complement rather than compete with each other. COCS studies give communities another tool to make decisions about their futures.

The above information has been taken from a fact sheet produced by the American Farmland Trust. The Trust works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.

For more information, contact: American Farmland Trust and search.

