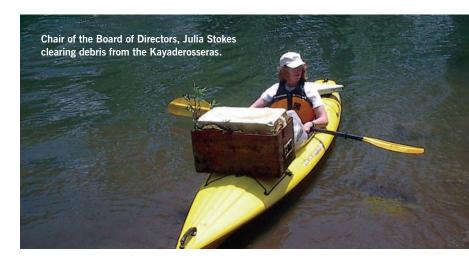


Saratoga P.L.A.N.

2009 ANNUAL REPORT





Chairperson's Message

2009 was a challenging year for all non-profits and Saratoga P.L.A.N. was no exception. PLAN had to take a hard look at its programs, services, and resources in order to get organized and streamline and upgrade its systems and functions. Committee procedures were established, file cabinets were purchased to create a central-

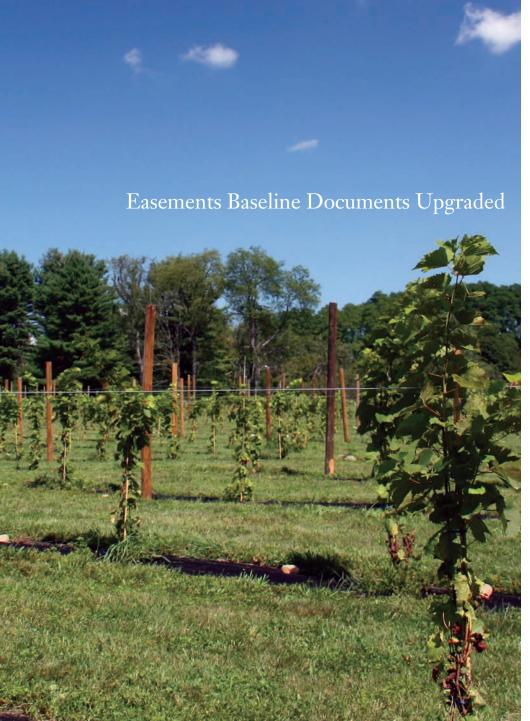
ized filing system, accounting methods were restructured, new policies adopted, a GIS mapping program was set up... not especially exciting stuff, but necessary to lay the foundation for our future.

The Board and our new Executive Director focused on our Stewardship responsibilities—the properties we own in fee or on which hold a conservation easement. With the assistance of the Leadership Saratoga Class and numerous Galway volunteers our Galway Preserve opened with public trails, a parking area and a revamped garage building that can be used for classes. We focused our community planning efforts on sharing the results of the Battles of Saratoga Viewshed Protection Plan. We consolidated our July Annual Meeting and our September Feast of the Fields.

On the board and staff level, we expanded the board with 7 new members and clearly identified what we expect of board members. We undertook the same review of staff roles and goals and made according changes to titles and responsibilities. We had to lay off one staff member and curtail some contractual relationships. Our Executive Director picked up those responsibilities while we determined how to continue the critical elements of our mission.

It was a challenging year but Saratoga PLAN is stronger, albeit leaner, for the effort. 2010 is already showing the benefits of the decisions that the Board and Executive Director made. Our new Chair, Katie Stone is poised to take the organization into our third decade!

Julia S. Stokes



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One of our primary projects of 2009 was to review and upgrade our easement baseline documents.

When a land trust agrees to hold a conservation easement on a property, it prepares an easement baseline document. The baseline provides a record of the condition of the property at the time when the easement is established. Text, maps, photographs, and other documents describe the property. This information is used to monitor changes on the property over time.

Whenever changes occur on the property – either by the owner, a third party, or a force of nature – whether the changes are sanctioned by the easement or not, the changes are noted by comparing them to the original baseline conditions. Changes could include building improvements, demolishment of a building, logging of a woodland, flooding, blowdowns, fires, dumping, abandonment of a field, etc.

Baseline documentation, therefore, is a fundamental component of the easement process. Over the past 25 years of active use of conservation easements for protecting land, land trusts have learned what is needed for good baseline documentation for monitoring and enforcing the terms of conservation easements. Standards have evolved and PLAN needed to better document some of its older easements. Easements are, after all, perpetual and record-keeping essential.

With a grant from the NYS Conservation Partnership and the Land Trust Alliance, Andy Fyfe reviewed and upgraded 20 of PLAN's easement baselines. He posted boundaries and took photos of sites and created more complete records of the properties where they were lacking. Kelly Holzworth, a volunteer with GIS expertise, offered countless hours of mapping services so that we would have aerials and topographic maps of each easement property. PLAN is honoring Kelly as its Volunteer Conservation Hero of the Year for her mapping services.

Planning Partnerships for the Future of Communities

Community planning is, by its nature, a partnership endeavor that involves bringing together a variety of perspectives that represent the affected community. Saratoga P.L.A.N. adds value to the process not only through its conservation expertise but also because of its regional approach for plans and projects that have a multi-municipal dimension.

After completing the "Battles of Saratoga Viewshed Protection Plan," grants from the Bender Family Foundation and National Park Service afforded PLAN the opportunity to create copies





"Over Sea," by Stu Eichel was part of *Views From the Battlefiled...Preserving Historic Lands*, a group exhibit of work by regional artists.

and maps and presentations for each of the seven municipalities and two counties that were part of the study area. Historic sites from the Revolutionary War, historically-intact views to and from those sites, and tools and resources for protecting those sites and views were outlined in the plans and presentations. Saratoga P.L.A.N., the Open Space Institute, Agricultural Stewardship Association, and Saratoga National Historical Park collaborated on a feasibility study for establishing a revolving loan and acquisition fund for the Historic Saratoga-Washington on the Hudson Partnership. The National Parks Foundation provided funding for the study.

One of the historic areas highlighted in the Viewshed Plan is the Siegefield, the area in Victory and Schuylerville where the British holed up for two weeks in October 1777, surrounded by Continental forces, following the main battles further south. The British eventually had to surrender, a move that caused a "Turning Point" in the American struggle for Independence. It is believed that the Americans held the southern bank of Fish Creek, where PLAN owns a small property with suspected earthworks. PLAN has received funding and services from New York State, American Battlefield Protection Program, Brookfield Power, Greenman-Pedersen, and the Historic Saratoga-Washington on the Hudson Partnership to conduct archeological and historic studies to document the events of the 1777 siege for part of a 6-mile recreational and interpretive trail from the Schuyler House through Victory Woods.

Thirty artists painted 60 views from the sites featured in the Viewshed Plan that

hung in an art show *Views from the Battlefield...Preserving Historic Lands* at the Saratoga Arts Center and at the Saratoga National Historic Park.

With its partners and dedicated corps of volunteers, PLAN also advanced trail plans in 2009 for the Zim Smith Trail, Champlain Canalway Trail, Malta Trolley Line, Bog Meadow Trail (Spur), and Geyser Road Trail. And, after 10 years on the shelf, plans for the Spring Run Trail have been dusted off. Federal stimulus funds were awarded to this "shovel-ready" trail in Saratoga Springs. The Saratoga County Board of Supervisors also received and matched federal funding for expanding the Zim Smith Trail into the Village of Ballston. The railyard redevelopment in Mechanicville is offering an opportunity to expand the Zim Smith on the other end as well. These off-road trails will offer safe recreation and transportation corridors for county residents.

PLAN continued to assist individual municipalities with community plans, too, participating in developing an open space plan for the Village of Round Lake and farmland protection plans for Charlton and Malta.

PLAN's Community Planning Committee is developing educational materials for local planning and town boards on regulatory and voluntary, incentive-based tools and resources for smart growth paired with conserving land resources. The Committee also developed guidelines, adopted by the Board of Directors, for the process that PLAN will use when deciding whether to take a position on a community planning issue.

Inviting the Public to Visit Preserves while Protecting Natural Resources

Preserve Improvements Saratoga P.L.A.N. is getting back to basics by investing in stewardship of its own properties. While respecting native flora, fauna, and the ecological processes that sustain them, PLAN is focusing its attention on providing safe, clear, interpreted, and enjoyable experiences for visitors to as many of our preserves as possible. We have been recruiting, training, and coordinating site stewards and other volunteers who are creating and implementing management plans. Entry signage and plantings, boundary posting, trail building and maintenance, maps and guides, invasive species control, trespass reme-



diation, parking areas, winter plowing, bridge re/building, and benches are examples of improvements that are being made on PLAN's properties. To help families and teachers use the preserves for fun educational activities, letterboxes (nature-inspired treasure hunts) have been hidden and curriculums have been developed for two sites.

Volunteers have been restoring Karner Blue Butterfly habitat at the Ushers Road site by clearing trees, managing invasive species, and planting 500 Blue Lupine seeds and 300 plants raised by students at Shenendehowa in their greenhouse.

Completing the Galway Preserve was 2009's biggest stewardship project. With grants from the Dockstader Trust and assisted by volunteers from Leadership Saratoga, Eagle Scouts, and local residents, trails were cleared and marked, signs installed, a parking area built, the garage stabilized and adapted as an outdoor classroom, furniture donated, slideshow developed, ecological inventory completed, curriculum developed, bridges constructed, debris removed, kiosk and bulletin board built, ribbon cut, and a "Friends of the Galway Preserve" group formed for ongoing stewardship

Local volunteers also built a spur to the Bog Meadow Trail in Saratoga Springs, raising the funds for boardwalks, bridging and signs from their neighbors and other supporters.



Educational Field Trips

The Alfred Z. Solomon Foundation awarded PLAN a grant to integrate its educational and volunteer programs. PLAN offered seven "Trail Days" throughout the year on our properties. After a morning guided hike led by naturalists or a nature scavenger hunt, participants then assisted with site stewardship on the preserves. We found that the audiences for the two activities were different and that it was more logical to offer educational and volunteer programs separately in the future. Educational field trips were held at: Galway Preserve, Spruce Mountain, Manning Cove, Carver Farm, Bog Meadow, Levine, and Lake Lonely.



Winter Festival

The Saratoga Sport & Social Club organized the Winter Festival with PLAN at the Saratoga Spa State Park. Lots of smiling cross-country skiers and snow sculptors enjoyed the heavy snowfall and warm cocoa while we raised \$3,000 for conservation!



The Basics of Land Conservation

Protecting land involves consultations, site planning, negotiations, contracts, maps, interviews, easement drafting, grant applications, fundraising, appraisals, surveys, title research, bridge loans, partnership-building, collaborations, and so much more!

In 2009, in addition to providing confidential consulting services to a number of property owners beginning to explore their options for land protection, Saratoga P.L.A.N. was advancing several land conservation projects:

- > Acquiring a conservation easement on 92 acres of farmland Round Lake and the Anthony Kill
- > Acquiring 5 acres on the Kayaderosseras Creek with the City of Saratoga Springs
- > Acquiring fee title to 61 acres in the Town of Northumberland
- > Acquiring fee title to 650 acres in the Town of Providence



Summer Feast for Conservation

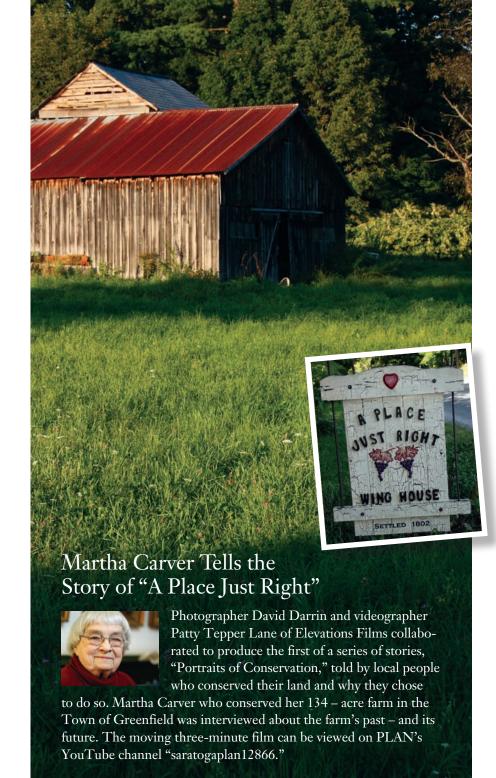
A balmy summer evening created the perfect atmosphere for 280 guests who feasted and celebrated our conservation heroes – property owners who had conserved their lands, volunteers who



gave outstanding service for conservation, local farmers who produced the raw materials for the harvest feast, and the chefs who created the amazingly diverse, tasty, nutritious, and refreshing menu. Led by Lynn Schumann, an avid conservationist, a team of volunteers worked to bring together the best of this region's bounty and beauty.

Conservation heroes honored at the Feast were: the Sweeney family who conserved 90 acres on Round Lake; Dave and Betty Larmon and the Fish Creek Rod and Gun Club who conserved 40 acres on Fish Creek; and the Leadership Saratoga team who developed the Galway Preserve for public access. A special tribute was made to Julie Stokes who guided Saratoga P.L.A.N. as Chair of its Board of Directors from the 2003 merger of the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region with the Saratoga Springs Open Space Project through its first six years.

Held at the Saratoga National Golf Club overlooking the 136-acre easement on Lake Lonely, the Summer Feast for Conservation netted \$24,000 for PLAN. Many thanks to our generous sponsors, volunteers, honorary committee members, farmers, chefs, guests, artists and other contributors to the silent auction who made this event a success.



Many thanks to our generous supporters who make conservation in Saratoga County possible!

Cathy & Bob Allen

Wallace Allerdice

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Saratoga P.L.A.N. Makes Its Own Maps.

For an organization that revolves around geography, maps are invaluable tools for understanding and communicating about land and its features and relational context. Thanks to a donation made by the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, PLAN was able to acquire Geographic Information software and a computer workstation. Behan Planning and Saratoga County Planning Department provided data sets to populate the system and we are starting to generate our own maps. We produced an on-line preserve guide of preserves open to the public and are starting to create downloadable trail maps for individual preserves. GIS has given a tremendous boost to all PLAN's programs – communications, community planning, land protection, outreach, and preserve stewardship.

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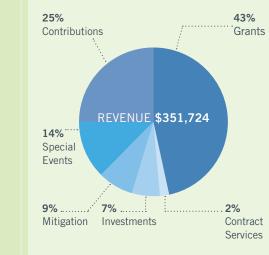
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2009 Financial Summary





Approximately \$70,000 of revenue received in 2009 is designated for projects in 2010 and beyond.

Saratoga P.L.A.N. is funded in part with public funds from the NYS Council on the Arts, a state agency, and the NYS Conservation Partnership Program. Complete audited financial statements for 2008 are available from the NYS Dept. of Law Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271 or from Saratoga P.L.A.N., 112 Spring St., Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.





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