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# Connecting the dots between land and people

In December 2017 Saratoga PLAN presented Conservation Hero awards to seven landowners and the City of Saratoga Springs in recognition of their valuable contributions to conserving 1,041 acres of land in Saratoga County. The Conservation Heroes included landowners, farmers, and elected officials who believe that maintaining and strengthening connections with the land we all love helps our county and our communities thrive.

Many noteworthy connections were made with these land projects. Don Carpenter's 89 acres and Dusty and Arlene Rhodes' 23 acres will connect with existing conserved properties to expand the Milton-Rhodes Preserve in the Town of Galway. New trail systems will be built to connect these beautiful lands, and eventually they may form part of the Long Path, connecting New Jersey to the Adirondacks.

Each farm protection project PLAN completes serves to connect local communities to their locallandscape, and later to food grown on fields you see as you drive to work or school. A community that can see its food being raised or harvested by people they know develops deep connections to the land and each other. When you can purchase healthy food from someone you know, who cares as deeply as you do about place, we all win.

Each new connection means more opportunities for making even more connections, which is why our projects are growing in scope and scale. In 2017, the Palmertown Conservation Area was a focus of PLAN. We led many community events to educate and inform the community about their connections to this beautiful landscape, extending from Saratoga Springs north to Moreau Lake State Park. At a community workshop in December, PLAN and partner the Open Space Institute connected community members, interest groups, local leaders, and anyone interested to gather ideas on the best way to connect the various public and private lands in the Palmertown Area. PLAN is actively scouting trail connections that will soon allow anyone to hike from one end to the other, with options for multiple uses that will connect local community members to the land.

In recognition of the growing scale of community land preservation needs in the county, PLAN is expanding its capacity in 2018 with the hiring of a Conservation Director. The director will spearhead PLAN's efforts to take on more and bigger land protection projects. The success of these projects will continue to strengthen connections between communities and community members. We hope you will join us in supporting these connections and in Preserving Land and Nature in Saratoga County. Let's get to work!

JACLYN HAKES, CHAIR

# SARATOGA PLAN 2017

# Making connections between people and the land



"They are true stewards of the land." —MARIA TRABKA

Saratoga PLAN's logo includes the tag line, "Preserving Land and Nature," but that is only one-half of our story. Every land project comes complete with valuable lands, farms, nature, wildlife, and environmental qualities that make it important to preserve. However, these qualities must first be identified and recognized by you, the people who own the land, the people who support the farmers who work the land, the hikers who explore the land, the communities that host the land, and the families that live on the land and nurture it.

That connection to the land we all have is what powers Saratoga PLAN, and is why strengthening these connections is so important to us. When a landowner comes to PLAN asking how we can help they always talk about how much they love their land and how they want to preserve it for future generations. Yes, there are many hurdles to cross to get there: costs, regulations, compromises, paperwork, delays. But, each landowner's love for their land powers them . through the process, and inspires us to work equally as hard to make it happen.

Conservation is not a one-way street. Conserving land is a complex transaction, and takes time, effort, expertise, and money, but these necessary steps result in an investment with compounded returns — in perpetuity. The dividends include farm-fresh food, clean air and water, natural recreational opportunities resulting in healthier families, and maybe just a moment or two of peace after a hectic day at work. These one-time investments, though, deliver benefits every year thereafter because conservation is permanent. The rewards for this hard work are endless, and they wouldn't happen without landowners extending their connection with the land to future generations.

> left to right: Dusty Rhodes Arlene Rhodes Joanne Yepsen David Bowman Dawn Szurek Don Carpenter Alice Farnsworth Neil Roberts Cathy Roberts Maya Vanderhorst Gary Vanderhorst Anne Vanderhorst Leah Vanderhorst

# SARATOGA PLAN 2017

# 225 Acres preserved in 2017

PLAN's land projects in 2017 are prime examples of how this connection to the land benefits us all. Three projects were closed, totaling more than 225 acres of cherished land added to more than 4,355 acres of lovely land that will be conserved in perpetuity. And, we're working on 13 more land projects encompassing 1,750 more acres in 2018!

# More dots being connected

These fand projects only represent a small part of the many connections we are working on. In December 2017, PLAN presented eight Conservation Hero awards to seven landowners and the City of Saratoga Springs, in recognition of their valuable contributions to conserving 1,041 acres of land in the county. These heroes included:

Neil and Cathy Roberts, for conserving 144 acres of their Fiddle-i-Fee Farm in the Town of Northumberland.

Gary and Anne Vanderhorst, for conserving 90 acres on the Cottage Farm, located in Charlton.

Dawn and Dorothy Szurek, for conserving 311 acres of fertile farmland in the Town of Charlton. David Bowman, for conserving 129 acres on the

Malta Ridge Orchard & Gardens in the Town of Malta.

Donald Tooker, for conserving 89 acres of his working farm in the Town of Wilton.

The City of Saratoga Springs, for conserving the 166-acre Pitney Meadows Community Farm located in Saratoga Springs. Mayor Joanne Yepsen and Commissioner Chris Mathiesen accepted the award on behalf of the city.

Don Carpenter, for conserving 89 acres of farm fields and wooded buffer to the Gloweegee Creek in the Town of Galway.

Dusty and Arlene Rhodes, for conserving 23 acres of woodlands connecting two other conserved properties in the Town of Galway.

It was wonderful to bring these Heroes together where they could connect with each other and connect to many PLAN supporters.

Each award recipient was presented with a handmade, hand-painted birdhouse, decorated by local artists to reflect aspects of the conserved properties. Birdhouses were built by Bruce Cranston, David and Cole Smith, and Mike Triller, and participating artists included Trish Lyell, Amy Smith, Dana Kear, Takeyce Walter, Kate Edwards, John and Chris Colley, Sue Ginouves, and Loretta Martin.

In her concluding remarks, Maria Trabka-said about the Heroes, "They are true stewards of the land who recognize that they are not only charged with the responsibility, but more like blessed with the opportunity, to care for a parcel of land for a short time while on earth as others who came before and will come after in that land's continuum."

# **Making Further Connections**

Each one of the projects noted met important criteria identified in PLAN's landscape analysis of Saratoga County. The Landscape of Saratoga County project was designed to help people start thinking about larger-scale landscape-level conservation and to take a bird's eye view of Saratoga County using the data provided to help them understand places they haven't personally experienced.

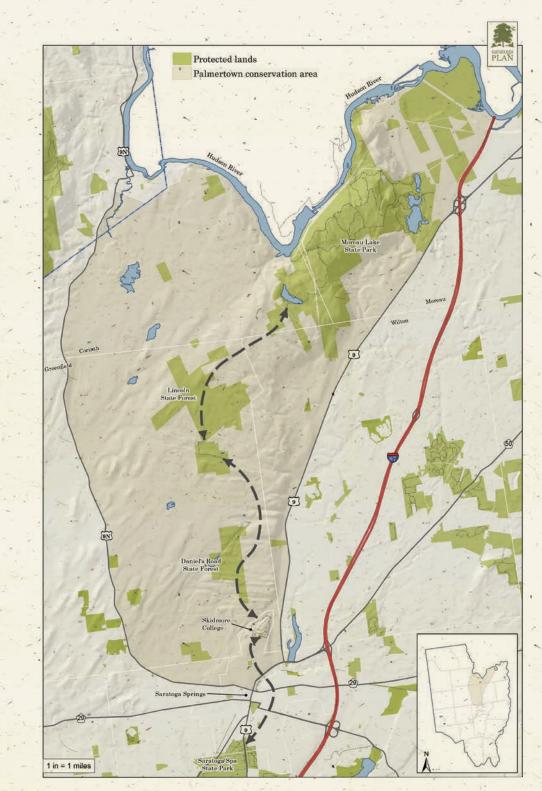
Building on the Landscape Analysis, and PLAN's near-term priorities emanating from that study, the Board and staff, working with consultant Conservation Impact, developed a Business Plan Blueprint calling for the need to connect important constituencies in the county to our work preserving the quality of life we all enjoy. We are currently working on new and innovative ways to reach out to these untapped supporters in order to engage them in conservation goals.

In order to meet the growing demand for land conservation services, and to connect with more communities and supporters, PLAN embarked on staff expansion and improvements to our operations. John Kettlewell joined the team as Constituent Engagement Director in early 2017, improving communications and outreach to every corner of the county. Mid-year saw the arrival of two program assistants to manage all of the hard, behind-thescenes work that keeps a land trust humming. A new Conservation Director was recruited in 2017, and he will begin work in early 2018 on some 13 land projects in the pipeline.

These investments in PLAN's future are already bearing fruit. More frequent and useful communications went out to thousands of followers via email, print, and social media. Events, including Feast of the Fields, were sold out. Hundreds of acres were added to protected lands, and numerous new projects entered the pipeline with funding secured for them.

The structure is in place to connect more people to the land, to connect more people to what we do, to connect more trails, and to connect more land projects to the more than 4,500 acres protected already.

We couldn't do it without you connecting with us. Let's grow together!





# GET OUT!

The Palmertown Conservation Area contains a wealth of natural recreational opportunities, and PLAN sponsored a series of events to show people more of what the region has to offer. A workshop focused on the fundamentals of animal tracking and winter ecology led by expert naturalist, Vince Walsh. A pack of 16 winter wildlife enthusiasts explored the woods and wetlands of Greenfield's Kawing Crow Awareness Center.







Connecting the trail dots

SARATOGA PLAN 2017

A major multi-year effort is underway to connect the trail dots between Moreau Lake State Park in the north to Saratoga Springs in the south, with many offshoots connecting local communities in Greenfield, Wilton, Corinth, and Moreau.

Volunteers joined PLAN staff in walking-the-walk over old logging roads, overgrown trails, and virgin forest, seeking the best routes through the beautiful Palmertown Ridge area. The goal is both to preserve these valuable lands and to make recreational opportunities available to local residents and visitors.

On May 1, 2017, at the Moreau Lake State Park Nature Center, graduate students in The State University of New York at Albany 2017 Graduate Planning Studio class delivered their final presentation analyzing conservation and recreation opportunities in the Palmertown Conservation Area before an audience of state park officials, horseback riders, mountain bikers, birders, hikers, volunteers, and conservation and sustainability professionals. The UAlbany class served as consultants for a "real-life" project, with Saratoga PLAN and the Open Space Institute serving as their "clients." The students' analysis provided a starting point for initiatives to involve the local community in developing a strategic and comprehensive conservation plan for the Palmertown Conservation Area.

These plans will depend on the support and advice of local communities. In 2017 PLAN, along with its partners, Open Space Institute and Alta Planning and Design, sponsored a community forum in Greenfield and a community survey seeking input on emerging recreation, conservation, and development opportunities in the Palmertown Conservation Area.

As we connect with the community to develop a strategy for the area based on its natural resources and its potential for economic development, making more and deeper connections with many different interests will be critical.

PLAN partnered with Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) to participate in the global Great Backyard Bird Count event, Led by SAAS's president, John Loz, Saratoga PLAN intern

Abbie Larkin and members of SAAS toured Skidmore's North Woods listening and looking for birds. Our count of individuals by species will be entered into a global database!



PLAN partnered with Moreau Lake State Park staff to explore Lake Bonita, a recent addition to the park

# Thank a volunteer!

With 10 public preserves and more than 22 miles of trails to maintain, Saratoga PLAN depends on the work of many dedicated volunteers. You may have met some of these tireless workers clearing downed trees, building kiosks, marking trails, working on bridges, or patrolling to make sure your hike is safe, fun, and rewarding.

Ralph Keating exemplifies the amazing contributions made every week. This past summer he headed out to the Galway Nature Preserve to do some work, and then submitted this report. It is a great example of what volunteers do, often out of sight and out of mind. The next time you enjoy a hike on a PLAN property, please thank a volunteer!

Ralph Keating, Cliff Sampson, and Mary Alice Nyhan "I got back to Galway Preserve today to do some of the building repair jobs that we discussed and also did trail work. First I went to Lowes at 8 am to get new windows, glazing and quickrete concrete mix.

Then starting at the preserve at 9, I did the following:

Removed old broken glass and replaced with the plexiglass panels, caulked with the window glazing; made a form for the hole in concrete wall and put in three layers of quickrete to build up the concrete to existing outer wall surface (I did this over the course of the day to let each layer dry); build up the inside of the hole in the roof with wood and then sheathing, then placed two layers of aluminum roofing material on the new sheathing under the existing roof material, then caulked all seams; cut the grass around the preserve and building; walked the trails and placed about 30 markers where they were missing or inadequate (as I walked I noticed 4 good sized trees down on the preserve trails; went back on the trails with chainsaw and removed all the trees from the trails); painted the trim around the preserve building with white semigloss exterior paint. I left the preserve at 5:15 and got home about 5:45. Long day — about 9.5 volunteer hours. I plan to get there again in 2 weeks to cut the grass before I go away for a vacation." — Ralph

# Connect with the land: on stewardship work

# "In perpetuity" sounds pretty

**daunting,** but not to Stewardship Coordinator Greg Redling. To protect Saratoga PLAN's 27 fee lands and 33 conservation easements in perpetuity requires a lot of planning, organization, and field work, but Greg is up to the task.

A "baseline" report is created when the property is first preserved. The baseline document describes the condition of the property in detail, and includes maps, photographs, and other documentation. Other files contain Property Condition Reports (PCRs) and Monitoring Reports, describing the state of the property during previous stewardship visits, which are conducted once a year a minimum. These documents and many others are retained and stored carefully, with copies in multiple locations.

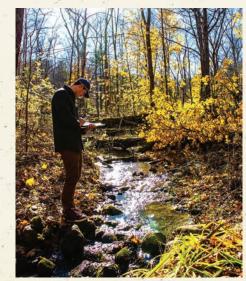
Monitoring properties on a regular basis for any changes or for any potential violations of the conservation easement is an important part of what a land trust does. To prepare for a day in the field on a conserved property it is first necessary to review the details of the conservation easement, with its written description of what the purpose of the easement is. In some cases the main purpose is to preserve the agricultural value of the land, while in other cases it might be mainly for recreational use.

Once Greg has done his advance work, a call to the landowner is made to make sure the visit will come at a good time. Plans are made for a weather window that will allow Greg to visit the property safely, but despite the best laid plans he often ends up hiking in the rain, braving snowy winds, or wading across a bog. One day he might be packing up and heading out to walk the boundaries of a protected farm, or to patrol a recreational trail.

Greg says, "It's easy to romanticize walking around on beautiful properties, but the reality is not quite that nice." He adds, "I've ripped my jacket and pants and gone waste deep in bogs."

A GPS unit records Greg's travels across the land, and the GPS tracks are used to create maps that are stored permanently with the land records. All of this takes a lot of time. A smaller property, under 100 acres, might be monitored in a few hours, while larger properties might require a day or more. The field work is then followed by the creation of detailed reports and maps. As an accredited land trust, PLAN is required to monitor every property on a regular basis and to store the records in perpetuity.

Greg says the key is to, "Take it step-by-step."







page 8

# **PLAN STAFF RECONNECT** WITH THE LAND

On a chilly day in January 2017, Saratoga PLAN staff were able to reconnect with the land on a visit to Tim Biello's Featherbed Lane Farm in the Town of Charlton. Tim works his land with the aid of draft horses and traditional farming techniques, and then sells the bounty to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscribers, who in turn get great pleasure from supporting local, farm-fresh food.

Saratoga PLAN is in the process of conserving the Featherbed Lane Farm and expects to close on a conservation easement funded by NYSDAM, Saratoga County, Equity Trust, RSF Foundation, and Local Farms Fund in 2018.

# Connect with us

In 2017 several new people made the connection with Saratoga PLAN, and now you can connect with them. John Kettlewell started in January as Constituent Engagement Director, and all of you have connected with him through e-blasts, Facebook and Twitter updates, events like Feast of the Fields, or maybe with a visit to the office.



Michelle Hall grabbed the reins of Program Assistant for Development, and

In June

immediately made a big impact with her work on the sold-out Feast of the Fields.



Also in June, Dana Kear came aboard as Program Assistant for Operations.

where she works to keep all those little things working right that allow everyone to get their jobs done.

In early 2018 a new Conservation Director will join PLAN's staff in order to connect us to more land protection projects.

As always, PLAN was ably assisted by a great group of interns. Abigail Larkin led many public education events in the Palmertown Conservation area and finalized the update to the countywide trails dataset. Allison Hargrave worked on conservation projects. Both Abigail and Allison have moved on to professional positions in the conservation and planning spheres.



Summer interns Laura



Kipper, Stewardship, and Rachel Renders, Communications. worked tirelessly on im-

portant projects. Laura continues to work part time on GIS and mapping projects. Rachel

was a key person in Feast planning.

Several new board members have added valuable connections to PLAN's outreach. Seth Dunn joined the board early in the year followed by James Towne. Later Lorraine Skibo, Karen Totino, and Billie Taft-Sitler came onboard. PLAN thanks John Barone. Tim Jaques, and Chip Ellms for their service on the board, and we know they will continue to maintain their connections with our land protection efforts.

# CONNECTING FARMS TO YOU

Months of planning go into the carefully orchestrated preparations for Feast of the Fields. In order to make it happen we connect farmers with local chefs, volunteers with farmers and vendors, site staff and chefs with PLAN staff and volunteers. We then put it all together in September to connect hundreds of supporters with delicious farm-fresh food.

A record number of Saratoga PLAN supporters turned out for the 12th Annual Feast of the Fields, held September 21st at Saratoga National Golf Club. Dishes included everything from Fried Maple Bacon Duck Rillettes, to Red Wine Braised Short Ribs, to Butternut Squash and Sweet Onion Lasagna. Desserts included Apple Cheesecake Mousse Parfait and Spiced Maple Pecan Cupcakes with Vanilla Butter Cream. Needless to say, nobody went home hungry. The delicious local food was washed down with area beverages ranging from Bowman Orchards Apple Cider and Hard Cider from Saratoga Apple, to beers from Artisanal Brew Works and Common Roots Brewing Company, to some of the harder stuff from Saratoga Courage Distillery and Upstate Distilling. There were wines from Fossil Stone and Victory View Vineyards. Silent auction items filled the big tent, where guests also watched artist Elisa Sheehan at work. Guests bid on donated items like a leather flight jacket, wine baskets, artwork, and experiences such as tour tickets on the Hoppy Trails Brew Bus. And, everyone was entertained by the sounds of Hot Club of Saratoga.

The 13th annual Feast will be September 20, 2018. Come and connect with us!

# reg Redling and aria Trahka

# Saratoga PLAN connects with partners to make it happen

# **. OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE**

OSI has helped to expand the available trail routes in the Palmertown Conservation Area by purchasing the Greentree Lake area, and PLAN explored and mapped possible trail routes during 2017. OSI is partnering with PLAN on community engagement activities and several land conservation projects inthe region.

# THE GREENBELT TRAIL

Saratoga PLAN has been connecting with local, like-minded organizations and community leaders to promote the creation of a multi-use trail that will circle the City of Saratoga Springs, and include connector spurs into town. PLAN is currently working with landowners on a key connection between the Bog Meadow Trail and Union Avenue.

# CONSERVATION CONVERSATIONS

Saratoga PLAN connected with the Town of Malta and invited the public to a free public "Conservation Conversation" in the Malta Community Center. More than 25 local landowners and concerned citizens attended the educational event lead by Maria Trabka, of Saratoga PLAN, Jaime O'Neill, Planner for Saratoga County, David Haight, Chair of the Town of Malta Farmland and Open Space Committee, Audrey Ball, Director of Parks, Recreation and Human Services for the Town of Malta, and Tony Tozi, Building and Planning Coordinator for the Town of Malta.

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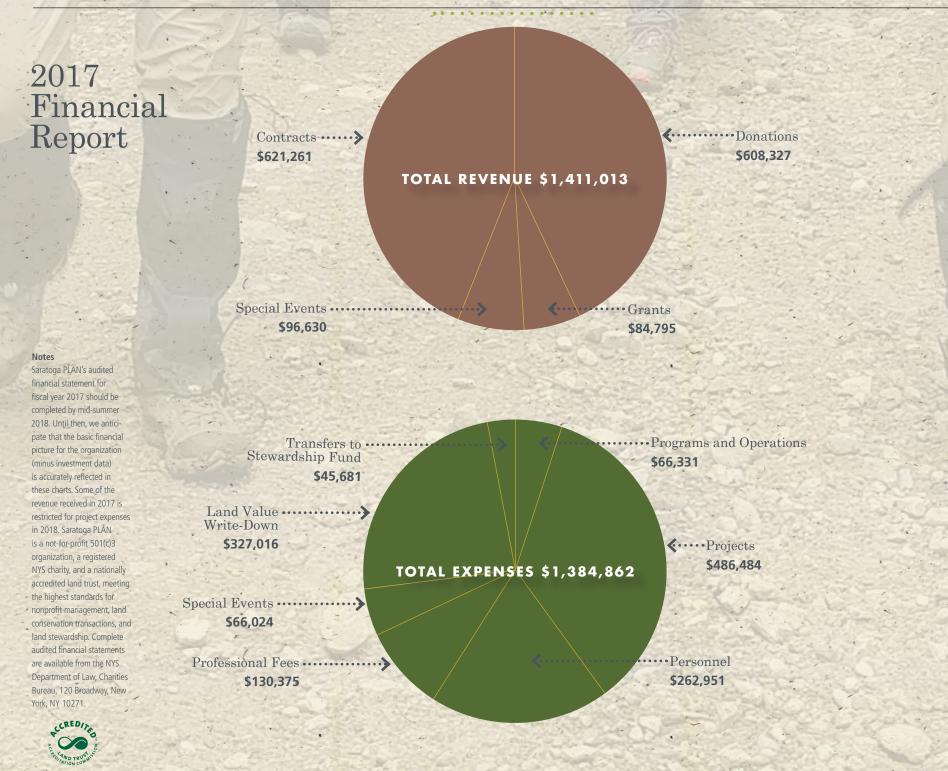
Topics discussed included currently conserved lands in Malta, five different options for conserving farms . and other properties, town regulations, and the pluses and minuses of different approaches to protecting natural spaces.

# HISTORIC HUDSON- HOOSIC RIVERS PARTNERSHIP

Saratoga PLAN worked with many other organizations and local communities in support of the creation of a new Champlain Canal Region Gateway Visitor Center, which was kicked off in 2017 with a timber raising ceremony. The new center will connect travelers to the historically significant and culturally unique region of the Saratoga and Bennington battlefields and the Champlain Canal.

# page 10

SARATOGA PLAN 2017



# Thank You!

Without your support we couldn't make the connections that Preserve Land and Nature for all of us. And, the most important connection is with you, the backbone of Saratoga PLAN.

# LEGACY CIRCLE

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