



saratoga  
PLAN

Preserving Land and Nature

SPRING 2018

# fieldnotes

Preserving the  
rural character,  
natural habitats  
and scenic beauty of  
Saratoga County.



CONSERVING  
FARMLAND



PROTECTING  
WOODS + WATERS



BUILDING  
TRAILS



## VOLUNTEER FOR FEAST

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Feast of the Fields will be on September 20, 2018. We need volunteers to help us with event preparations. If you're an ace party planner, a wizard with setup, or just willing to pitch in please email us for more information: [michelleh@saratogaplan.org](mailto:michelleh@saratogaplan.org).



## WATER CHESTNUT PULL

Help us remove invasive species from Fish Creek on June 30. It will be hard work, but also a fun day on the water helping to preserve this beloved waterway. For more information: [info@saratogaplan.org](mailto:info@saratogaplan.org).



## CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF BOG MEADOW TRAIL

The first public trail in Saratoga Springs is 25 years old and PLAN will be celebrating with improvements. Join us for a celebration later this year, and read more inside.



**CONNECT WITH PLAN** Stay up to the minute on the latest developments at Saratoga PLAN, and don't miss out on hiking trips, events, volunteer opportunities, and other special happenings. Sign up for our email newsletter and check us out on Twitter @SaratogaPLAN, on Facebook @Saratogaplan, and on Instagram @saratogaplan.

## 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOG MEADOW BROOK NATURE TRAIL



In 2018 Saratoga PLAN will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail. This trail was the first public trail in Saratoga Springs and was the root project for the open space movement in Saratoga County. The trail is owned by the City of Saratoga Springs, and has been maintained by Saratoga PLAN.

However, despite its lasting success, there is lots of work to do in order to improve and maintain the trail. PLAN is working on three capital projects to be undertaken upon NYSDEC approval.

PROJECT 1 is a new connector trail from the Meadow Brook Road parking lot. This new segment will eliminate the necessity of walking from the parking lot along the road to access the trailhead.

PROJECT 2 consists of repairs to a large, boardwalk and viewing area damaged by intense storm events and increased beaver activity. This is a popular picnic and birding destination.

PROJECT 3 will improve the trail section south of Route 29/ Lake Avenue. This trail will ultimately become the Bog Meadow Connector to the Greenbelt Trail, that will eventually circle the entire city of Saratoga Springs. The trail will be raised to create a smooth and hard surface above existing and emerging railroad ties.

The City of Saratoga Springs has already budgeted and authorized a \$10,000 cash match to fund these projects, and PLAN is working with other City departments interested in project participation and support.

All aspects of these projects should be completed by the end of 2018. When finished they will improve the safety, access, and resiliency of the trail. Stay tuned for information on events marking the 25th anniversary of the trail and its ongoing improvement.



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOG MEADOW BROOK NATURE TRAIL ON THE PLAN WEBSITE: [WWW.SARATOGAPLAN.ORG/EXPLORE](http://WWW.SARATOGAPLAN.ORG/EXPLORE)



Seated: Dawn and Dorothy Szurek. Standing (left to right): Greg Redling, Dana Kear, Maria Trabka, Allison Hargrave, Tara Anne Pleat, Lawrence E. Howard.

## 405 ACRES CONSERVED



ON FEBRUARY 22 Saratoga PLAN finalized perpetual conservation easements on three adjacent scenic and productive farm properties in the Town of West Charlton, totaling more than 405 acres. Landowners Dawn and Dorothy Szurek sold a conservation easement on two farms of more than 315 acres, and Gary and Anne Vanderhorst sold an easement on an adjacent farm of close to 90 acres. Saratoga PLAN will steward these actively farmed properties in perpetuity, preserving open space, productive farm and forestland, and providing scenic enjoyment for all. These properties bring PLAN's total of conserved lands in the county to about 4,985 acres.

Dawn Szurek explained her love of the farm where she grew up: "Driving the tractor, you're looking at the views." Dorothy, Dawn's mother, added that they wanted to keep the land in farming in order to honor her late husband, John M. Szurek's, legacy. "It's really to protect it for the future," added Dawn, noting that her father built up the farm through hard work and sound conservation practices, for which he received an award.

The Szureks said they will use a portion of the proceeds to help improve the farm. Dawn said that West Charlton is very "ag-friendly," and she has received a lot of support from the community. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets provided partial funding through a competitive process to purchase the conservation easements and pay for the transactional costs of the projects. PLAN's Conservation Director, Mike Horn, added that PLAN is currently working on seven more farmland conservation projects, which will add more than 1,100 acres to the conserved land total in the county.





## COMMUNITY WEIGHS IN ON PALMERTOWN



**SARATOGA PLAN IS CURRENTLY OFFERING** a series of community engagement events that bring citizens and experts together to explore the ecosystems of the Palmertown Conservation Area. These events are

supported by funding from New York State's Conservation Partnership Program for land trusts helping to accomplish New York's Open Space goals.

In addition to these public events, co-sponsored and co-managed by Alta Planning and Design and the Open Space Institute (OSI), Saratoga PLAN released a survey to gather information and insights from the public. The survey asked respondents to indicate their current interests and preferences in relation to the study area. The survey also posed questions on how to best proceed in the future.



*Katie Petronis of OSI leads the discussion in Greenfield.*

In addition, key stakeholders were identified by Saratoga PLAN and OSI and were invited to an in-depth interview to more fully share their local knowledge about the study area and further illuminate the priorities and needs in the region. To encourage candor, Alta Planning and Design conducted these 15-30 minute conversations in confidence.

Key findings of this work include strong agreement that the area is well suited to conservation and recreation, and many people are enthusiastic about the idea of a ridgeline trail connecting Moreau Lake State Park to Saratoga Springs. Stakeholders overwhelmingly support muscle-powered recreation activities. To implement the plan, stakeholders indicated a preference for a nonprofit organization or a public-private partnership to take the lead.

**READ THE PALMERTOWN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT ON THE WEBSITE, AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PALMERTOWN CONSERVATION AREA. [WWW.SARATOGAPLAN.ORG/EXPLORE](http://WWW.SARATOGAPLAN.ORG/EXPLORE)**

## CONSERVATION COLLEAGUES

**THE DEMAND FOR CONSERVATION SERVICES AND INFORMATION HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER THAN IT IS TODAY.** The importance of undeveloped land in providing environmental services and quality places is widely recognized. With the accelerating pace of development, the aging of farmers and landowners, a growing population, and the fierce competition for good land, the time is ripe to build a coalition of professionals to meet the growing needs of our communities.

To address this need, Saratoga PLAN kicked off the first Conservation Colleagues meeting in February. The thought behind building a team of professionals in Saratoga County is to expand the knowledge base and technical acumen available to help communities accomplish their stated goals related to preserving rural character, land conservation, and environmental protection. One way to do that is to have more people understanding and promoting options for conserving farmland.

The group includes municipal planners and agricultural educators and advisors, with the goal to meet monthly to grow our collective farmland conservation knowledge and efforts. The team may eventually expand to other professions such as realtors and attorneys, and may broaden its goals to include conservation of natural areas.

The purpose of the Conservation Colleagues is to:

- Learn techniques for farmland conservation, farm succession, and farmland access
- Build a network of peers who can assist each other
- Improve the ability to answer inquiries from landowners and their advisors
- Expand awareness of funding opportunities and criteria
- Promote better screening and advice on farmland conservation
- Broaden outreach to landowners to promote available programs
- Expand collaboration on outreach programs, workshops, mailings, brochures, fact sheets
- Educate more professionals able to consult with landowners with confidence
- Share progress on land projects as they develop over time
- Dispel misinformation
- Collaborate to prepare grant funding applications



## MEET MIKE HORN

Michael Horn has joined Saratoga PLAN's staff as Conservation Director. Mike will be working on more than 10 land projects currently underway, as PLAN expands its efforts to conserve land in Saratoga County.

Executive Director Maria Trabka, said, "Mike brings a wealth of experience in working on complex projects that will be invaluable as we take on more and bigger land conservation projects."

Prior to joining PLAN, Horn worked in a variety of roles at the General Electric Company, most recently as Pricing Manager in the Renewable Energy business.

"I'm looking forward to working with the community to preserve the great quality of life that attracted my wife and I to Saratoga," said Horn, father of two. He added, "It's great to continue my work on supporting a sustainable future."

## STAFF

Maria Trabka, *Executive Director*

Michael Horn, *Conservation Director*

John Kettlewell, *Constituent Engagement Director*

Gregory Redling, *Stewardship Coordinator*

Dana Kear, *Program Assistant for Operations*

Michelle Hall, *Program Assistant for Development*

## 2018 BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Making an investment in our future by preserving the landscape we all love builds strong communities and strengthens our economy. Saratoga PLAN offers a wide variety of business partnership opportunities that can include benefits for your organization, including recognition in this newsletter, listings on our website, a spot in the program given to 600 Feast of the Fields attendees, and even complimentary tickets to Feast! Contact PLAN to learn more.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Saratoga PLAN is a nonprofit land trust that helps communities make long-term decisions to sustain our region as a great place to live, work, visit, and farm.

PLAN assists landowners with fulfilling their conservation goals for their land and provides stewardship for over 4,985 acres of farmland, forest, natural habitat, trail corridors, historic places, and water resources in Saratoga County.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT [WWW.SARATOGAPLAN.ORG](http://WWW.SARATOGAPLAN.ORG)  
OR CALL 518-587-5554

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