

## **Saratoga PLAN's Protection of Snake Hill:**



- Snake Hill is a 32-acre forested dome located in the Town of Stillwater on the eastern side of Saratoga Lake.
- Funding from New York State enabled Saratoga PLAN to acquire the property from Stewart's Shops.
- Snake Hill is currently closed to the public as we consider management options for this permanently conserved land, the largest unprotected shoreline on Saratoga Lake.

## **Since Acquiring Snake Hill, We Have:**

- ✓ learned more about the native plants, wildlife, soils, and geology of Snake Hill
- ✓ identified invasive plant species, and begun treatment to reduce their impacts
- ✓ visited the site with environmental specialists to explore management options
- ✓ considered how Snake Hill complements other protected places nearby
- ✓ begun talking with neighbors and nearby community leaders about their ideas
- ✓ identified three possible options for managing Snake Hill, including our preferred Site Option B



## **What's Next:**

- sharing several options for management of Snake Hill for your feedback (information is also available on our project webpage [SaratogaPLAN.org/snakehill](http://SaratogaPLAN.org/snakehill)) until Friday, September 13, 2024. You can also scan the QR code above to visit the site now.
- revising our management approach based on your and our partners' feedback
- continuing to learn about Snake Hill natural resources and history
- meeting with the community again in Fall 2024, once we refine our preferred management option

## Snake Hill SITE OPTION A



**Management Focus:** Resource protection of a wild preserve

**Site Access:** Public access would not be allowed.

Administrative access for resource management would be on foot only.

**Visitor Experience:** Snake Hill would be viewable from the water and from various points around Saratoga Lake. The primary visitor experience would be Snake Hill's contribution to the viewshed of Saratoga Lake.

**Education Opportunities:** There would be no on-site education programs under this option. Saratoga PLAN would highlight Snake Hill's importance as a conserved and protected location along a developed lakeshore. Communication and education would focus on the value of land and water conservation in general, and the role of Snake Hill among other protected lands in the region.

### **Resource Management:**

- Maintain and improve native species and biodiversity.
- Minimize invasive species and soil erosion.
- Protect water quality.
- Protect viewsheds from Saratoga Lake.
- Protect natural quiet for wildlife.
- Use the least intrusive tools for resource management.

### **Facilities:**

- A small parking lot off Route 9P for PLAN staff use

### **Benefits and Challenges of Site Option A**

- Continues opportunity to experience Snake Hill from the water or other locations around Saratoga Lake
- Prohibits public access to a site with safety concerns (steep slopes)
- Allows for off-site education about the role of protected areas within a more developed area
- Management activities would focus on resource protection, such as addressing harmful invasive species, not visitor use
- Beneficial impacts on habitats and wildlife because of management activities
- Negligible impacts on soils and geology from PLAN activities
- Negligible impacts on natural resources because of no public use
- Protection of viewshed from water – no visitors will be seen
- Some opportunities for volunteer engagement via PLAN stewardship projects
- Maintains a wild place that can be seen from many locations along Saratoga Lake
- Small administrative parking lot may attract trespass, but could allow for informational signage

## Snake Hill SITE OPTION B Saratoga PLAN'S Preferred Option



**Management Focus:** Education and resource protection

**Site Access:** Public access would be limited to small groups attending PLAN or partner programs or volunteer events.

Trails would be maintained with a natural surface for pedestrian use (no bikes or motorized vehicles).

**Visitor Experience:** Visitors to Snake Hill would encounter other visitors in attendance at their program. No additional visitors would be on the site during programming. No public access would be provided outside of PLAN-sanctioned programs and events.

**Education Opportunities:** Small group activities and programs would be focused on environmental education, cultural resources and history, and protection of resources in the face of climate change and human activity. PLAN may partner with like-minded organizations to lead and organize on-site educational programs. Most programs would be based on Snake Hill, with water-based occasional programming on Saratoga Lake.

**Resource Management:**

- Maintain and improve native species and biodiversity.
- Minimize invasive species and soil erosion.
- Protect water quality.
- Protect viewsheds to and from Saratoga Lake.
- Protect natural quiet for wildlife and visitor enjoyment.
- Like at other Saratoga PLAN properties, a volunteer site steward may be assigned to Snake Hill.

**Facilities:**

- A small parking lot off Route 9P
- A picnic table or benches
- A simple loop trail
- Interpretive signage in the parking lot and on the loop trail
- Carry-in / carry-out for trash and recyclables
- No restrooms would be provided

### Benefits and Challenges of Site Option B

- Opportunity to experience Snake Hill with small groups of other visitors, not crowds
- PLAN staff would be focused on education and resource management, not visitor management
- Opportunity for public education about native plants and invasive species
- Minor impacts on soils and geology from visitor activities
- Some management activities may be carried out in support of educational goals (e.g., volunteer days) or for visitor safety (e.g., hazard tree removal)
- Increased opportunities for volunteer engagement via management projects
- Volunteer site steward may monitor use and support programming
- Clearly marked loop trail with a surface that is maintained for visitor safety and limiting soil erosion
- Maintains a wild place that can be seen from many locations along Saratoga Lake
- Small parking lot may attract trespass or non-permitted use

## Snake Hill SITE OPTION C



**Management Focus:** Passive recreation opportunity along Saratoga Lake  
**Site Access:** Visitor access would be allowed during daylight hours with scheduled times that may change seasonally. Limited parking would be available, and racks would be provided for visitors arriving by bicycle. Trails would be maintained with a natural surface for pedestrian use (no bikes or motorized vehicles).

**Visitor Experience:** Visitors would have access to a location along Saratoga Lake for passive recreation like nature viewing and picnics. Visitors would have opportunities to view Saratoga Lake from a loop trail. Visitors would regularly encounter other visitors not in their same group.

**Education Opportunities:** There would be no on-site education programs under this option. Onsite passive educational opportunities about Snake Hill would be provided via limited interpretive signage. Occasional PLAN programming may occur at the site with a focus on resource protection and reducing human impacts.

### **Resource Management:**

- Focus on safety for visitors at Snake Hill (e.g. trail maintenance, hazard tree management).
- Management decisions would likely be based on mitigating impacts from visitor use, such as minimizing invasive species and soil erosion.
- Protect viewsheds to and from Saratoga Lake.
- Like at other Saratoga PLAN properties, a volunteer site steward may be assigned to Snake Hill.

### **Facilities:**

- A parking lot off Route 9P
- A picnic table or benches
- A simple loop trail
- Interpretive signage in the parking lot and on the loop trail
- Carry-in / carry-out for trash and recyclables
- No restrooms would be provided

### **Benefits and Challenges of Site Option C**

- Opportunity to visit Snake Hill for day use passive recreation
- Site could become busy with visitors on weekends or in summer season
- PLAN staff would need to be focused on visitor use, not education or resource management
- Increased likelihood of negative impacts on natural resources from visitor use
- Management activities may be carried out for visitor safety (e.g., hazard tree removal) and reducing impacts of visitor use (e.g., trash removal)
- Volunteer site steward may monitor use
- Clearly marked loop trail with a surface that is maintained for visitor safety and to limit soil erosion
- Dogs would be allowed, on-leash and under control at all times
- Views from the water may include seeing visitors on Snake Hill
- Parking lot may attract trespass or non-permitted use
- Likelihood of increase in and introduction of new invasive species
- Less protection of wildlife currently inhabiting Snake Hill
- Could create noise pollution for users on Saratoga Lake and neighbors