

Town of Saugerties OPEN SPACE PLAN



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TOWN OF SAUGERTIES OPEN SPACE PLAN

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TOWN OF SAUGERTIES OPEN SPACE PLAN

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ACRONYMS

CAC	CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (OF THE TOWN OF SAUGERTIES)
HITS	HORSE SHOWS IN THE SUN
LDR	LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICT (OF THE TOWN OF SAUGERTIES)
MDR	MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICT (OF THE TOWN OF SAUGERTIES)
NYS	NEW YORK STATE
NYSDEC	NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
NYNHP	NEW YORK NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM (OF THE NYSDEC)
OPRHP	OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION (OF NYS)
PDR	PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS
PIPC	PALISADES INTERSTATE PARK COMMISSION
SAV	SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION
SBA	SIGNIFICANT BIODIVERSITY AREA
USACOE	UNITED STATES ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Located between the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River, the Town of Saugerties is a beautiful and diverse landscape of forests, farms, rivers, mountains and hills. There is so much open space in Saugerties that it may be hard to understand why the town needs a plan. But, as the community continues to grow and change, these open spaces are at risk. Growth not only affects the town's beauty and scenery. It can result in many basic concerns - such as threats to water quality and loss of farmlands. Growth can also result in quality of life concerns such as housing affordability and increased costs of community services. We don't have to look far down the Hudson Valley to see how growth without a plan has damaged open space and altered quality of life.

Modern day growth in Saugerties is associated with the completion of the New York State Thruway in the lower Hudson Valley in the early 1950s. The thruway opened up Saugerties, and many other communities, to increased development. When IBM moved to the Town of Ulster, outside of Kingston, in the 1960s, Saugerties experienced rapid growth that continued through the next couple decades. In the early 2000s, Saugerties again experienced a growth period in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which resulted in many people moving up the valley from New York City. Since the town is not currently (2009) faced with extensive growth pressures, it is a good time to develop a plan to ensure that the town's open space resources are protected through the next period of growth. To this end, this planning process and project document these resources and devise ways that the community can help to preserve them into the future.



Malden Beach

WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

Many people think of “open space” as the open fields that frame views of mountains, rivers and other scenery. Certainly, these areas are part of Saugerties’ open space, but there are many other resources - from small wetlands to large forests and rock ledges - that are all part of the town’s open space. While the aesthetics of open space is very important, open space also contributes to the environmental health of the community – not just for wildlife, but for people too.

Instead of thinking of open space as isolated properties or areas, in this plan, we think of open space as a system of resources that provide important benefits to people and wildlife. For example, many Saugerties residents (both town and village) depend on the Blue Mountain Reservoir as a source for their drinking water. The reservoir’s ability to provide clean water is a function of the open space - specifically the large forests - that surround it and help to purify the water entering the reservoir. These forests extend beyond Saugerties’ borders into the Catskill Mountains.

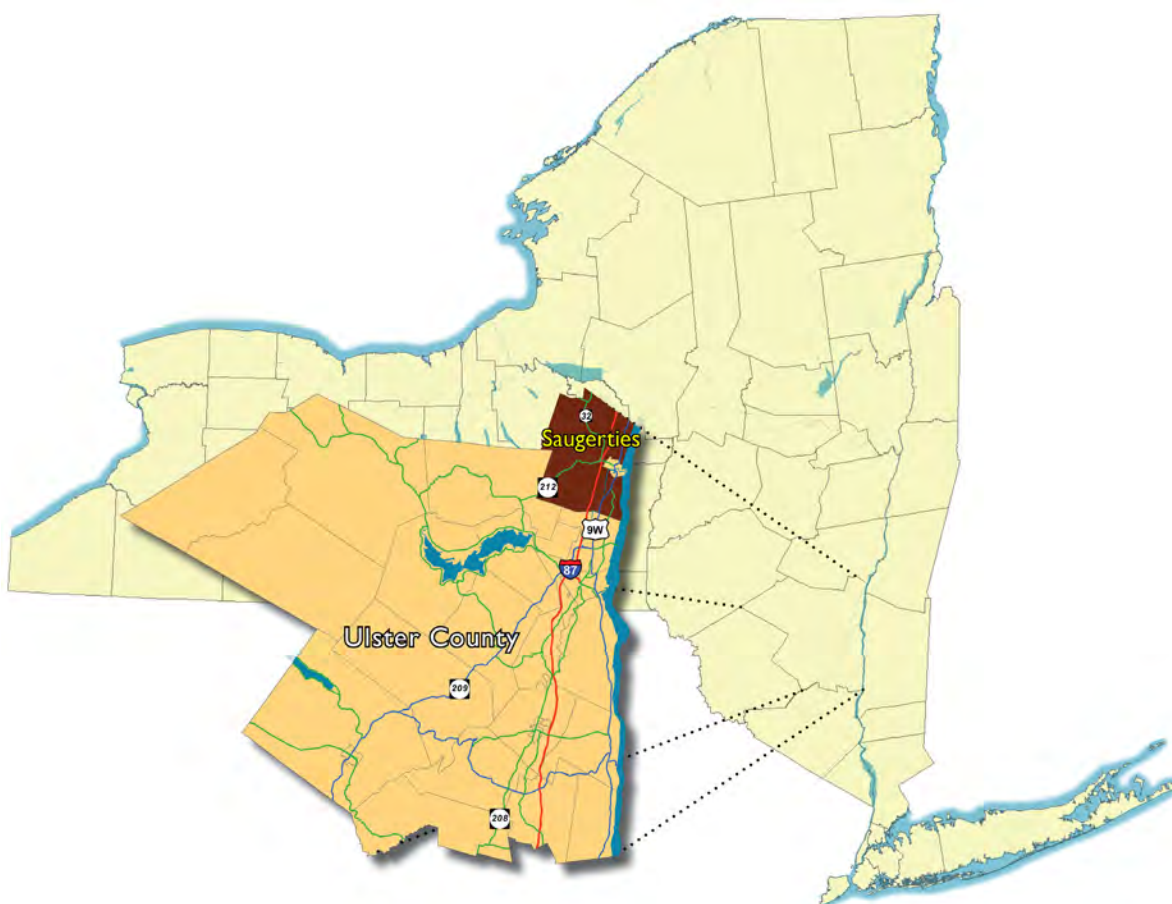


Views of the Catskills from Route 32 near the Saxton Flats

The same is true for the other major systems in Saugerties - the Hudson River, the Esopus Creek, and the limestone and shale ridges that traverse the center of town are all regional resources.

The wetland, river, forest and soil systems in Saugerties must remain relatively intact in order to ensure that they continue to function properly to provide habitat for wildlife, and food and water for people. But this does not mean that every acre of land in Saugerties should be “locked up” or protected from development. In fact, there are many different land uses that can help to generate economic value while maintaining open space. For example, outdoor recreation and agriculture, when conducted responsibly, can help to keep land “open” while still maintaining the intrinsic value of the resources. Likewise, development patterns that focus growth in certain areas (such as villages and hamlets) can also help to preserve larger areas of open space while providing areas for the town to grow.

This plan will help to identify the systems in Saugerties that contribute to the community’s health, well-being and quality of life, including the natural communities, water resources, agricultural resources and historic and cultural features. It will also help to provide a solid foundation for the town to ensure that these systems remain healthy in the future.

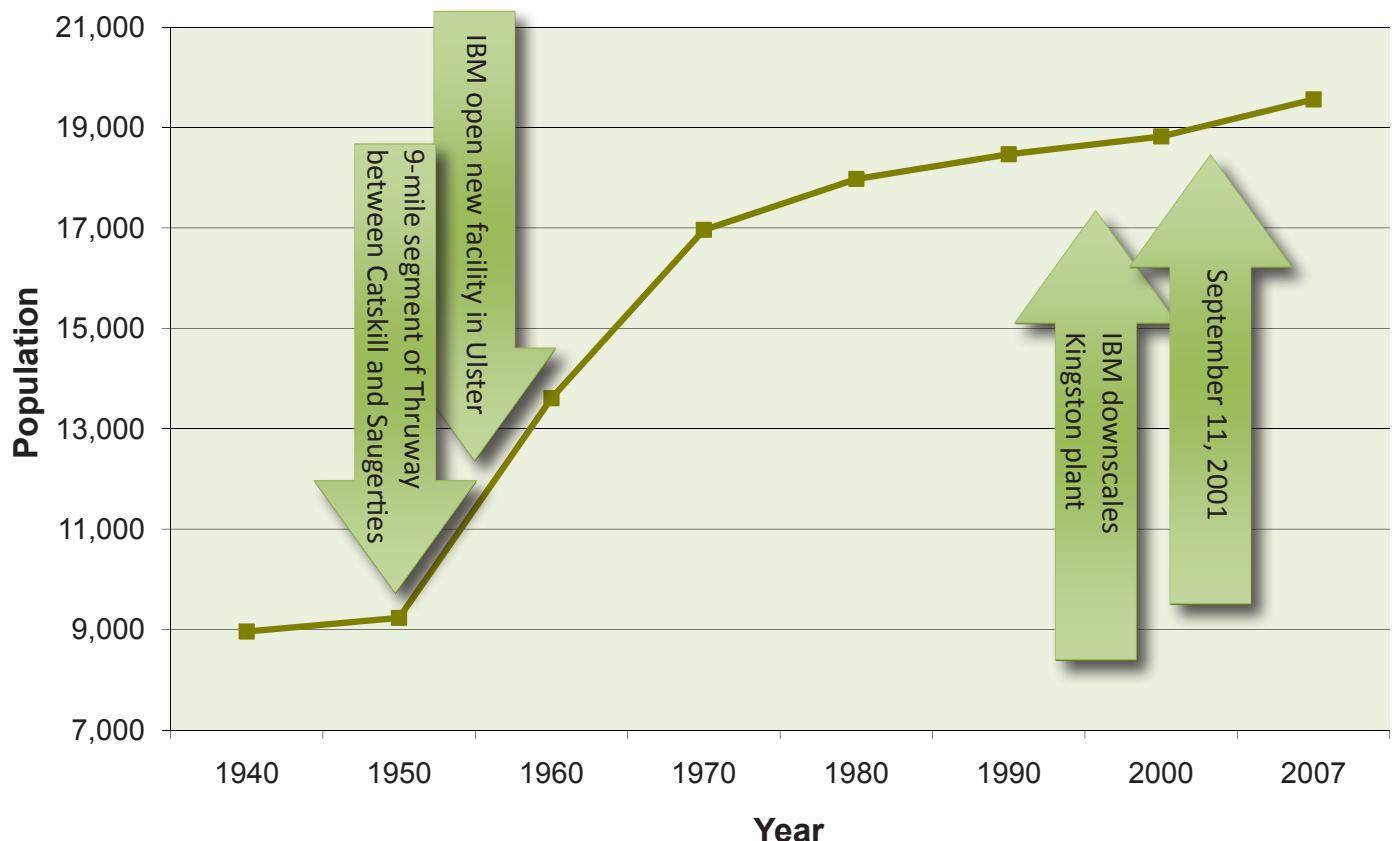


CHALLENGES TO MAINTAINING OPEN SPACE IN SAUGERTIES

Ensuring the health of the town's open space systems is not without its challenges. There are several threats to the town's open space systems. The most predominant threat in Saugerties is growth and development. As discussed earlier, The Town of Saugerties has experienced many periods of population growth (see Town of Saugerties Population 1940-2007). However, while increases in population often coincide with increased pressures on a community's open space resources, the quantity of population growth itself is not necessarily detrimental to the town's open space. Rather, it is how the growth happens that results in impacts to open space. A modest population increase that consumes large areas of land for homes and associated development (driveways, parking areas, etc.) can have a larger impact on the community's open space resources than a more significant population increase that utilize less land.

Period	# Permits	Annual Average
1980-1989	931	93
1990-2003	443	34
2004-2007	311	78
2008-May 2009	33	23
TOTAL	1718	

Town of Saugerties Population; 1940-2007



Like many other Hudson River Valley communities, Saugerties continues to grow and accommodate more people and homes on more land. The 1980s were a major growth period, when the town added 931 homes and increased the population as well. Between 2000 and 2007, new homes were added and the population grew substantially. Some of this growth can be attributed to the post 9-11 environment, when many people moved up the Hudson River from New York City.

Other than development, threats to the town's open space system include improper management and stewardship of land; spread of invasive species and pests; and climate change - all of which are discussed further in this document.

Although it may seem like a minor concern, improper land management and stewardship can have a very large impact on the town's natural resources. Consider for example, the impacts to water quality if each home in Saugerties used pesticides and fertilizer to keep their grassy lawns looking good.

Many impacts associated with improper land management can be avoided with a good informational program. For example, educating the public on the dangers of pesticide use and providing examples of alternative, pesticide-free lawn and landscaping techniques, can help to reduce the use of these substances. Or, the clearing of large expanses of forest (or other habitat) to make room for grassy lawns can be avoided when siting a home. Preserving at least a portion of habitat area on an individual lot can help to maintain larger habitat connections for wildlife. The first step to ensuring that habitat preservation is incorporated into the development process is education.

Climate change is also becoming a major concern at the local and global scales. Although there are many concerns related to climate change, in this plan we focus on how climate change might affect the town's open space lands such as water resources and agriculture. For example, changes in climate might alter growing seasons, or they might result in the migration of important natural communities. The open space plan provides an opportunity to document some of the concerns and challenges.

Lastly, the spread of invasive species, which is expected to be exacerbated by climate change, can also have impacts on natural communities. Invasive species are often non-native and are typically able to thrive in a diversity of environmental settings and/or have few predators or biological controls. Phragmites (common reed) and purple loosestrife are two examples of invasive species that are commonly found in Saugerties. Also, along the Hudson River shoreline, the invasive plant water chestnut is often found. Invasive species are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

THE BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

The benefits of open space - such as forests, rivers, wetlands and farms- are so numerous and far reaching that they are hard to quantify. Besides improving quality of life through recreation and scenery, open space also provides clean water and food supply. Below is a short summary of some of the benefits of open space.

CLEAN WATER

Conserving open space helps to maintain the quality of surface water (such as wetlands and rivers) and groundwater (aquifer) resources. It is much less costly to maintain the quality of these waters by conserving and stewarding land than to construct facilities to treat drinking water. By conserving land within the Catskill and Delaware watersheds, New York City has avoided most of the \$8 billion in estimated costs to construct a new water filtration plant.ⁱ Preserving open space also helps to reduce stormwater runoff and filters pollutants from water. American Forests estimates that trees in U.S. metropolitan areas provide \$400 billion in stormwater retention benefits – when compared with the costs of constructing stormwater retention facilities.ⁱⁱ

FISCAL BALANCE

Open space conservation is a part of a fiscally-balanced community. Nationwide, for every tax dollar that is received, farmland requires \$0.36 in services (such as schools, roads, water, sewer, police and fire services), while residential development requires \$1.16 in services (commercial development requires even less – \$0.27).ⁱⁱⁱ More locally, a 2005 study commissioned by the Town of Rochester in Ulster County came to a similar conclusion: for every dollar of revenue received, the town spent \$1.17 in services for residential development, while for every dollar of revenue received for the combined category of open space and commercial development, the town spent just \$0.18.^{iv} The bottom line is that residential development can be costly to service, and open space provides a very important balance to the tax base by keeping large amounts of land open without a need for extensive services.

FOOD SUPPLY

Farms provide a source of food and other agricultural products (such as fibers and landscape plants) for local consumers. This local food supply helps to maintain food security and reduces the amount of energy spent in transporting food long distances. A 2002 study by Worldwatch Institute concluded that food sold in U.S. supermarkets travels an average of 1,500 miles before reaching our plates.^v Eating local food provides countless benefits, including the availability of fresh-picked, nutritious foods and the opportunity to make a physical connection to our meals.



The Saugerties Farmers Market is a community destination and a great source for local food - Photo by Joy Moore

ECONOMIC VALUE

Working farms and forests provide income to local families and contribute to the regional economy. According to USDA's census of agriculture, the market value of Ulster County's agricultural products was \$65.6 million in 2007 (the most recent year of the census) - almost double that of 2002 (\$34 million). Recreation and tourism are major sectors in the region that are dependent on the conservation of open space, wildlife, and agricultural resources. Open space resources such as the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River help to foster a tourism-based economy.

INCREASED PROPERTY VALUES

Proximity to parks in urban areas has been shown to account for up to 15 - 20% of a property's value, according to the National Association of Homebuilders.^{vi} For example, a seminal study from Boulder, Colorado,^{vii} found that the existence of greenbelts (linear open space features such as trails or stream corridors) showed a beneficial impact on adjacent residential property values ranging from 8 to 32 percent. Another study on the effect of proximity to forest preserves from Grand Rapids Michigan found a premium of 19 to 35 percent in the value of lots bordering the preserve.^{viii}

HEALTH OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Protecting open space helps to maintain functioning natural systems, which are required for the long-term health of wildlife and ultimately people. Landscape ecologists and wildlife managers support the conservation of large, unfragmented habitat "hubs" or core areas that are connected by rivers, streams, mountain passes and other natural corridors, as part of a balanced natural system.



The large, unbroken forests in the western part of Saugerties provide important connections to the Catskill Mountains for wide roaming mammals such as bobcats and black bear

THE PLANNING PROCESS

In early 2008, the Town of Saugerties received a grant from the Hudson River Estuary Program to develop an open space plan. In July 2008, the town hired Behan Planning and Design (a consulting firm in Saratoga Springs) to assist with the plan. The open space plan was overseen by a 10-member Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC). The mission of the CAC is to:

“survey and monitor area natural resources and environmental conditions and make recommendations to Town Board regarding conservation and protection of our natural resources and environment. To work with and advise planning and zoning boards to ensure that development is environmentally sound and planned with the future in mind.”

The CAC met monthly during the open space planning process to discuss and advance the open space plan.

The planning process began with an open public meeting in September 2008 where participants helped to identify the open space resources that were important for further study. This input directed the inventory mapping and data collection for the topics within this plan, including:

- Important Natural Areas (natural communities and water resources)
- Agricultural Resources (active farms and soils)
- Historic Resources
- Recreation



Participants review preliminary open space inventory maps at the September 2008 workshop

After the September 2008 meeting, the consultants and CAC collected additional data and developed inventory maps. They also conducted focus groups to explore concerns and opportunities for three areas that were important to the community:

- Natural Areas
- Recreation
- Large-Acreage Landowner Input

After collecting input from the community, the CAC and consultants developed draft goals and strategies for the open space plan and met with the public again in April 2009 to get their feedback and assess priorities. With this input, the draft plan was developed. A summary of the comments from each meeting is provided on the following pages. Detailed comments from both the public meetings are provided in Appendix A.



Participants helped to identify needs and concerns and prioritize them at the September 2008 workshop

THE PLANNING PROCESS

A SUMMARY OF COMMON THEMES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 2008 PUBLIC WORKSHOP

MAJOR CONCERNS

- Taxes and affordability of large acreages of land
- Funding open space preservation (where's the money going to come from?)
- Public understanding of the economic value and benefits of open space
- Lack of local control (developers come in from outside of the area)
- Property rights
- Food and water security for the future
- Conflicts between uses of open space (such as ATVs)

NEEDS/OPPORTUNITIES

- Access to the Hudson River and other waterways
- Wetland and water quality protection (aquifers)
- Maintaining scenic views
- Creative incentives for resource conservation
- Maintaining agriculture in the community
- Conserving forestland and providing public access where appropriate
- Increased tourism
- Pedestrian, equestrian, and bike trails
- Awareness of resources and their value, existence, and how to use them

COMPONENTS FOR A TOWN OPEN SPACE VISION STATEMENT

- Clean water, air
- Jobs, economy
- Sense of place
- Rural tradition and character
- Natural and historic resources
- Retain the special features of Saugerties: limestone ridges, pastures, wetlands, meadows, mountain and river views, historic homes
- Respect community value

A SUMMARY OF COMMON THEMES FROM THE APRIL 2009 PUBLIC WORKSHOP

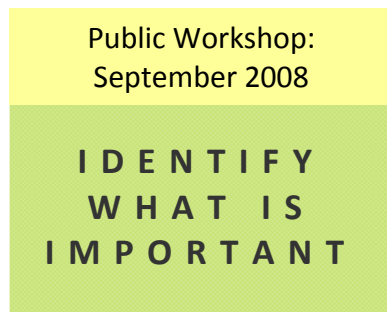
COMMENTS ON GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- Participants supported the use of tax incentives and tools to help landowners remain in Saugerties
- Several participants noted the need for a broader amount of income-supporting uses in rural areas of town (such as cottage industries)
- We will need to be smart and maximize the town's resources to implement the open space plan effectively
- Participants liked the goals and strategies related to access and connectivity of open space and trails

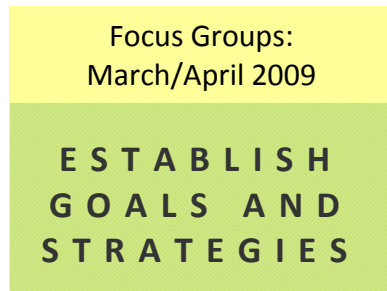
PRIORITIES

- Education of the broader community about the values of open space
- Preservation of agricultural resources
- Tax incentives for landowners
- Developing and connecting trails and open space areas

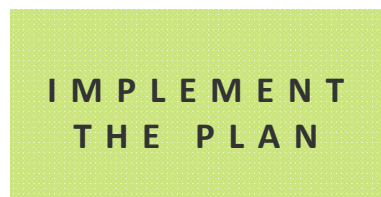
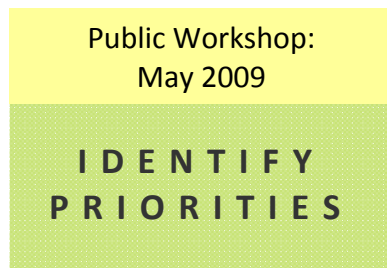
THE PLANNING PROCESS



Although the flowchart on this page shows a linear course of action for the open space plan, in reality this process is much more dynamic. The process is shaped by public and stakeholder input (identified at the top line of each process element) as well as the ongoing guidance of the Saugerties CAC.



Although there is some overlap and feedback between the various process elements, the end result is an open space plan that includes the identification of resources (what is important); establishment of goals and strategies; and priorities. The process does not end once the plan is developed - the implementation stage is ongoing and the plan should be revisited and updated throughout time.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Early in the open space planning process, the CAC developed a set of principles for the open space plan. These principles helped to guide outreach and served as a framework for the plan development. The principles are consistent with the feedback from the public and from landowners in the community.

OPEN SPACE PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The natural and agricultural resources of Saugerties are a significant element of the town's heritage, health, and character.
2. The town can continue to grow and prosper economically while maintaining the resources that are necessary to sustain a healthy environment for people and nature.
3. The people of Saugerties are part of our open space heritage. All members of the community should be involved in the development of an open space plan.
4. Private landowners are primary partners in the conservation of the town's resources. Landowners should be included and engaged in the process of open space planning.
5. The town will consider the fiscal benefits and costs of all elements of its open space plan to inform decision making and ensure that any town funds and/or taxpayer dollars allocated to the conservation of open space is fully supported by community members.
6. Because the resources of Saugerties do not end at the town borders, connections and regional context will be considered in the planning process. Saugerties' plan will be consistent with the State and County plans.
7. The open space plan and its recommendations will be supported by the town leadership and public.

LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT

In every community, there is a body of data - laws, plans, studies and projects - that guide day-to-day land use decisions. The Comprehensive Plan is the predominant planning document that guides a town's future by establishing a vision and setting priorities and policies for land use, natural resources, transportation, infrastructure, community services and other areas that are important to the community. In New York State, the comprehensive plan serves as the framework for zoning regulations. The Town and Village of Saugerties Comprehensive Plan (1999) is the most current document for this purpose. Goal #7 from the joint town-village comprehensive plan is specifically related to this open space plan:

GOAL #7: Town and Village efforts should promote awareness and protection of natural resources, wilderness and scenic areas. Saugerties is ideally located between the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River. Its green, open spaces are one of its most precious non-renewable natural resources. These areas have aesthetic and recreational value for both residents and visitors. Establishment and maintenance of wilderness corridors are vital.

Zoning and subdivision regulations also guide the town's land use patterns, and have great influence over how the town looks and feels, and how resources are managed and maintained. Zoning also has influence on the town's fiscal well being, specifically through the mix of land uses that are permitted. Fiscally healthy communities need to have a good balance of land uses that generate more tax dollars than they require in services - such as open space, commercial, industrial and agricultural land uses. This has been documented time and again through numerous cost of service studies, which consistently show that open space land uses are fiscally positive.

In recent years, substantial changes have been made to the Town of Saugerties' zoning regulations, including the addition of overlay districts to help preserve sensitive resources and aquifers, the addition of overlay districts to enhance gateway corridors, and the addition of conservation subdivision regulations to support clustering of development with a more flexible layout to encourage open space preservation.

Studies estimate that for every dollar of tax revenue collected, residential development requires \$1.16 in services (such as schools, roads, water and sewer) while open space and farmland only requires \$0.36.

Source: American Farmland Trust. 2000. *Cost of Community Services Studies Fact Sheet*.
<http://www.farmlandinfo.org>

The town also adopted a local law (Local Law #3 - Historic Preservation Ordinance, adopted in 2004 and amended in 2008) that establishes an Historic Preservation Commission. The commission is currently developing a list of structures and properties for local designation. This is discussed further in the Historic Resources section of Chapter 2.

In April 2009, the town adopted a right-to-farm law which affirms the town's commitment to agriculture and establishes some protections for agricultural landowners against nuisance claims, among other things.

Other related planning projects and reports include the Saugerties Area Mobility Analysis initiative; the Ground Water Protection Plan for the Town of Saugerties; a planning project at Winston Farm; development of a recreational trail system; and habitat mapping efforts conducted through Hudsonia’s Biodiversity Assessment Training methods. These projects are all discussed in further detail below.

SAUGERTIES AREA MOBILITY ANALYSIS

The Saugerties Area Mobility Analysis explored transportation needs (including bicycle and pedestrian mobility) and developed solutions in the Village of Saugerties and some areas of the town, specifically Route 32 and Route 9W, as well as Glasco and Malden Turnpikes.

GROUND WATER PROTECTION PLAN

The Ground Water Protection Plan for the Town of Saugerties was completed in 2005 by the New York Rural Water Association. The plan discusses the use and availability of groundwater in Saugerties, recharge and discharge patterns, and contamination concerns. It also discusses strategies for groundwater protection, some of which have already been implemented.

WINSTON FARM

The Winston Farm is a prominent property with access to I-87 (exit 20) and major roadways in town. It is also the largest undeveloped parcel in Saugerties that is not preserved. The Town of Saugerties, in collaboration with Ulster County and the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation, is exploring the possibility for high-technology development on Winston Farm. On January 29, 2009, the project partners conducted a forum to open a community dialogue about what could happen on the site. This forum is part of an ongoing process to determine possibilities for the site. It could serve as a good example of a large-scale development that supports open space preservation while providing for growth of the town.

RECREATIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

The Town of Saugerties is in the process of seeking funding to develop a recreational trail system within Cantine Park, including connections along Washington Avenue Extension and Canoe Hill Road. The system would connect Cantine Park to HITS, Saugerties Junior and Sr. High and the Village of Saugerties.

HABITAT MAPPING

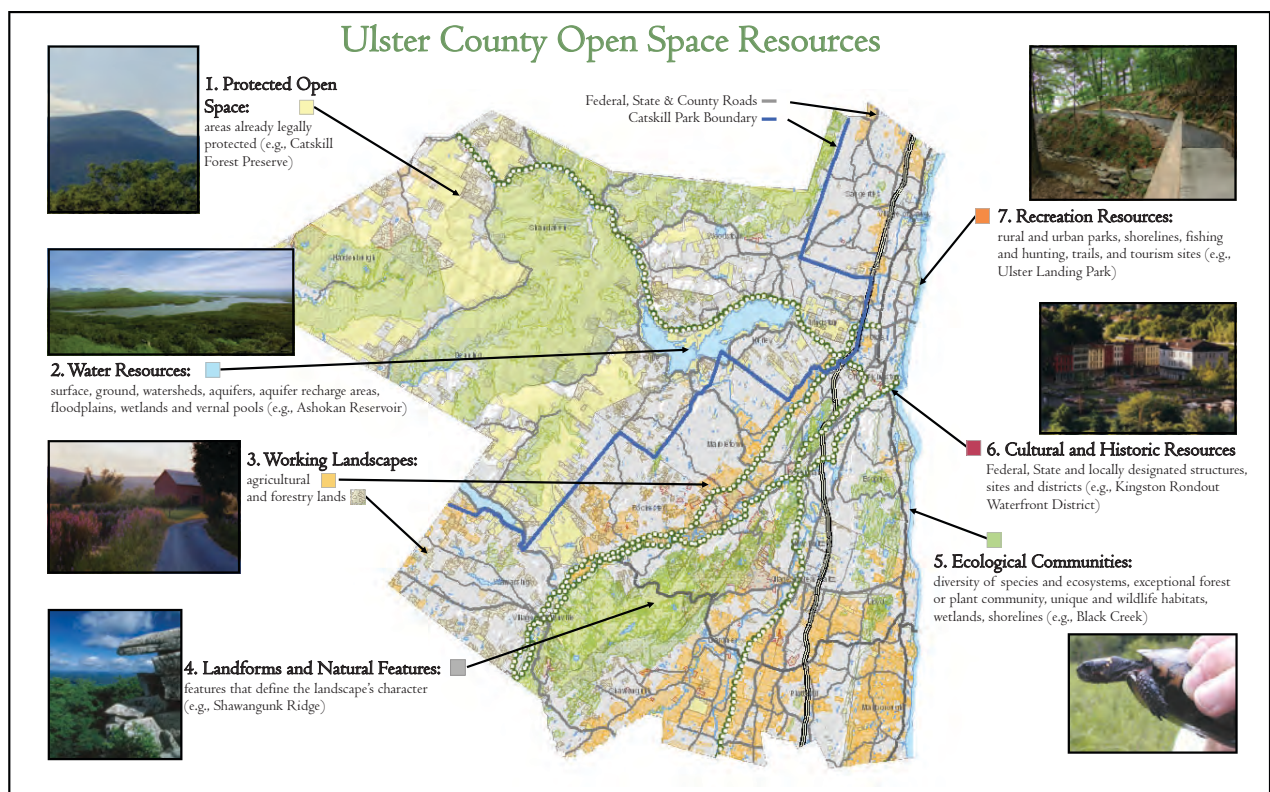
Volunteers in Saugerties have completed a Biodiversity Assessment Training project through Hudsonia, Inc. which resulted in the mapping of approximately 4,000 acres of habitat in the northeast part of town, in the vicinity of Bristol Beach/Eve’s Point.

LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT

There are also several regional planning projects that are related to the Saugerties Open Space Plan. The *Ulster County Open Space Plan* (adopted December 2007) identifies county-wide resource patterns and helps to establish a framework for coordinating open space conservation and management efforts. It also establishes the need to identify priority conservation and priority growth areas, which is also discussed in this plan. Ulster County also developed a sustainable economic development plan (*Ulster Tomorrow*, 2007) which focuses on “improving living standards and quality of life while protecting our natural resources” among other things. Lastly, the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is also relevant to this project.

On the watershed level, the Lower Esopus Creek Watershed Partnership is an intermunicipal partnership of seven municipalities, including the Town and Village of Saugerties. This unique voluntary partnership supports research such as the River Reconnaissance Report of the Lower Esopus Creek, and conducts education and outreach to a diverse audience. More information can be found at: <http://loweresopuswatershed.org>

Another project that is related to the Saugerties open space planning efforts is the Scenic Byway project in the Town of Hunter. The Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway is currently under consideration for state scenic byway designation. This byway would connect three existing segments of scenic byway in the Town of Hunter, creating a system of byways through the town. There are opportunities to extend the system into the western part of Saugerties, discussed further in Chapter 3.



County-wide open space resources from the *Ulster County Open Space Plan (2007) Executive Summary and Map Book*

CONCLUSION

Open space is an important element of Saugerties' character and quality of life - and it is an important contributor to the town's economic well-being. The Town of Saugerties has been proactive with planning and zoning initiatives to help preserve open space and water resources. This open space plan will add more depth to these efforts by helping to document the open space resources that are important in the town and setting direction for the town to follow to ensure that these resources are maintained in the future. Chapter 2 provides a detailed inventory of the open space resources in Saugerties. This is followed by Chapter 3, which establishes goals and strategies for preserving such open space resources.



Malden Sunrise Photo by George Heidcamp

ⁱ *Draft New York State Open Space Conservation Plan*. November 2005.

ⁱⁱ American Forests. September 1997. *The State of the Urban Forest: Assessing Tree Cover and Developing Goals*. <http://www.americanforests.org/ufc/uea/stateof.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Farmland Trust. November 2002. Cost of Community Services Fact Sheet. http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/27757/FS_COCS_11-02.pdf.

^{iv} Margaret Bonner and Francis Gray. 2005. *Cost of Community Services Study*. Town of Rochester, NY.

^v Rich Pirog. July 2003. *Checking the Food Odometer: Comparing Food Miles for Local Versus Conventional Produce Sales in Iowa Institutions*. Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

^{vi} Darryl F. Caputo. 1979. *Open Space Pays: The Socioenvironmentics of Open Space Preservation*. Morristown: N. J. Conservation Foundation.

^{vii} Mark Correll et al. 1978. *The Effects of Greenbelts on Residential Property Values: Some Findings on the Political Economy of Open Space*. [Land Economics](#).

^{viii} P. Thorsnes. 2002. *The value of a suburban forest preserve: estimates from sales of vacant residential building lots*. [Land Economics](#).

CHAPTER 2

INVENTORY

USING THE INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

This inventory report documents the important open space resources in Saugerties through the use of maps and narrative. It provides a town-wide blueprint of the natural, agricultural and cultural systems that shape Saugerties and provide residents with fresh local food, clean air, and clean water. The elements that are discussed further in the chapter include: existing parks and preserved open space, important natural areas, agricultural resources, historic resources, and recreational resources. This chapter also discusses climate change and its potential impacts on the town's natural and agricultural resources.

THE FOLLOWING MAPS ARE INCLUDED IN THIS CHAPTER:

Page 26 - **Existing Parks and Preserved Open Space:** Parks and natural areas that are owned by the state, county, town, and land trusts. Many of these lands are open to the public.

Page 27 - **Important Natural Areas:** Mapped natural communities such as forests, wetlands, limestone ridges, and water resources in Saugerties.

Page 47 - **Large Forest Blocks:** Mapped forest "blocks" of 200 acres or more.

Page 51 & 53 - **Build-out Potential** in the Low-Density Residential (LDR) and Moderate Density Residential (MDR) Districts: Analysis map depicting potential single-family development based on the existing zoning in the LDR and MDR districts.

Page 55 - **Agricultural Resources:** Prime farmland soils, statewide important soils, and active agricultural parcels.

Page 66 - **Historic Resources:** National Register historic landmarks; local landmarks and buildings that have been identified by the Town of Saugerties Historic Preservation Commission as significant historic sites; and other (non-designated) cultural and historic icons in Saugerties.

Page 69 - **Recreational Resources:** Existing private and publicly-owned recreational resources, as well as future concepts for recreation (such as trails and scenic byway connections) in Saugerties.



OVERVIEW

The maps in this plan are especially helpful for locating resources at the town-wide scale and helping to shape a big-picture vision of how the many resources within the Town of Saugerties are interconnected. This portion of the open space plan, as well as the entire plan and narrative, should be consulted as follows:

- By town staff, committees and boards to provide supporting documentation for grant submissions, such as applications to the New York State Farmland Protection Program.
- By landowners, developers, engineers, architects, Planning Board members, and other project partners in Saugerties when planning, designing, reviewing, and permitting land development projects in Saugerties.
- By the Town Board, Planning Board, and other committees in Saugerties when making decisions about infrastructure (such as the extension of a water line or road).
- By the Town Board and Comprehensive Plan Committee when developing updates to the town's Comprehensive Plan.
- By the Saugerties CAC and Planning Board to help guide the identification and design of conservation and development areas within a conservation subdivision.
- By the Saugerties CAC and Planning Board to guide any future town investment in open space conservation, such as a general obligation bond, real estate transfer fee, or budget allocation.
- By New York State, Ulster County, Greene County, and municipalities surrounding Saugerties (including the Village of Saugerties and the communities on the eastern side of the Hudson River) to help coordinate intermunicipal efforts such as watershed protection or trail development.

ABOUT THE MAPS

Maps are not static documents. They change over time as data are developed and improved. The maps in this plan illustrate the most current information available by the agencies and organizations who are responsible for developing the data. These maps provide a helpful way to visualize the resource patterns in Saugerties. However, it is always important to check with the agency that is responsible for map data for more current updates and/or more site-specific information at the time that such data is needed to inform a decision or action. None of the maps in this plan replace the requirement to consult with local, state, and federal agencies through the environmental review process.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Outside of the town's built-up areas, the landscape of Saugerties is a diverse mixture of forests, farms, rivers, wetlands, and many other natural communities. A number of regionally-scaled natural features are partially located within or adjacent to Saugerties. Although these features extend beyond the boundaries of Saugerties, they help to define and organize landscape patterns within the town itself.

The **Catskill Mountains** and foothills, in the western portion of town (#1 on the map to the right), are replete with running streams, wetlands and forests. An important geological and topological feature - a **limestone and shale ridge** (#2 on the map to the right)- traverses the center of the town. The **Hudson River** (#3 on the map to the right) forms the eastern border of Saugerties and extends far beyond Saugerties both to the north and south. The Esopus Creek Watershed is another regional resource that is partly located in Saugerties.

Regional features, by their very definition, do not end at the boundaries of individual communities. In Saugerties, many of the most significant resources cross town, and even county, lines. Although the purpose of this inventory is to document resources within Saugerties, it is important to understand and consider the regional context. Awareness of regional context not only informs decision making at the town level, but enables the Town of Saugerties to play an informed role in the regional conversations and partnerships that will ultimately be needed to protect regional resources.



Regional resources in Saugerties include the Catskill Mountains (1), the Limestone and Shale Ridge (2) and the Hudson River (3). These are all designated Significant Biodiversity Areas in the "Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Framework" for the Hudson River Estuary Corridor (2006)

CONSERVED OPEN SPACE

Currently, there are about 2,400 acres (6% of the town) protected from development - or permanently conserved as open space. To put this in context, the entire Town of Saugerties encompasses about 42,000 acres. Most of this conserved open space falls within the Catskill Forest Preserve. There are also several small but significant town and state-owned parks along the Hudson River. The **Existing Open Space map** on page 26 illustrates these conserved lands. A summary of the major elements illustrated on the map follows immediately below.

About 2,400 acres in Saugerties are set aside as conservation land. This represents about 6% of the town's land area.

STATE OWNED LANDS

Originally the site of clay mines used for brick making, **Bristol Beach State Park** is the largest parcel of Hudson River parkland in the Town of Saugerties. The property includes Hudson River shoreline, marshes and tidal flats, woodlands and meadows. Over the years, various parcels have been acquired by partners including the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC), Scenic Hudson, and New York State. Today, the park is about 186 acres in size.

The 10 acres at Eve's Point (a narrow spit of land that juts out into the Hudson River) were originally acquired in 1990 by Scenic Hudson and were eventually transferred to New York State as part of Bristol Beach State Park. The parkland is primarily undeveloped and the beach can only be accessed by boat. A 2005 report on the feasibility of swimming sites in the Hudson River ranked the park as a Category D, which means that there are "substantial barriers" to the development of a swimming site at Bristol Beach including sensitive aquatic plants, wetlands, and muddy soils. Bristol Beach State Park is currently accessed by Emerick Road.

The Great Vly Wildlife Management Area is owned and managed by the NYSDEC, and is located within the Towns of Saugerties and Catskill. The 184-acre management area includes a parking lot, boat access, and opportunities for hunting, fishing, bird watching, snowshoeing, and other outdoor activities.

The Catskill Forest Preserve is the state owned and managed land within the Catskill Mountains. The preserve currently contains about 287,000 acres. Saugerties is at the eastern boundary of the Catskill Forest Preserve. To date, there are 1,343 acres of land in Saugerties that are part of the Catskill Forest Preserve. More information on the Catskill Forest Preserve can be found on the NYSDEC website at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5265.html>.

Turkey Point is a large waterfront property owned by the NYSDEC. It includes forests, fields, Hudson River shoreline, a wharf, and a navigational light. NYSDEC is currently working with the Town of Saugerties to develop trails and access to the property.

The Highwoods Multiple Use Area is a 43-acre property located along Dutchtown Road near the southern border of Saugerties. It is owned by the State of New York.

TOWN-OWNED LANDS

Cantine Field is a 127-acre recreational complex owned and operated by the Town of Saugerties under the Department of Parks, Recreation & Buildings. Cantine Field offers a diversity of recreational amenities including ball fields, tennis courts, and an ice arena. The park also hosts many festivals and events, including the annual Hudson Valley Garlic Festival.

Glasco Mini-Park is a riverfront park located along the Hudson River in the hamlet of Glasco. The park offers a boat launch, picnic area, playground, and pavilion area.

Malden Mini-Park is a riverfront park located along the Hudson River in the hamlet of Malden. The park offers a boat launch and picnic area, as well as a river front overlook.



An overlook of the Hudson River at Malden Mini-Park

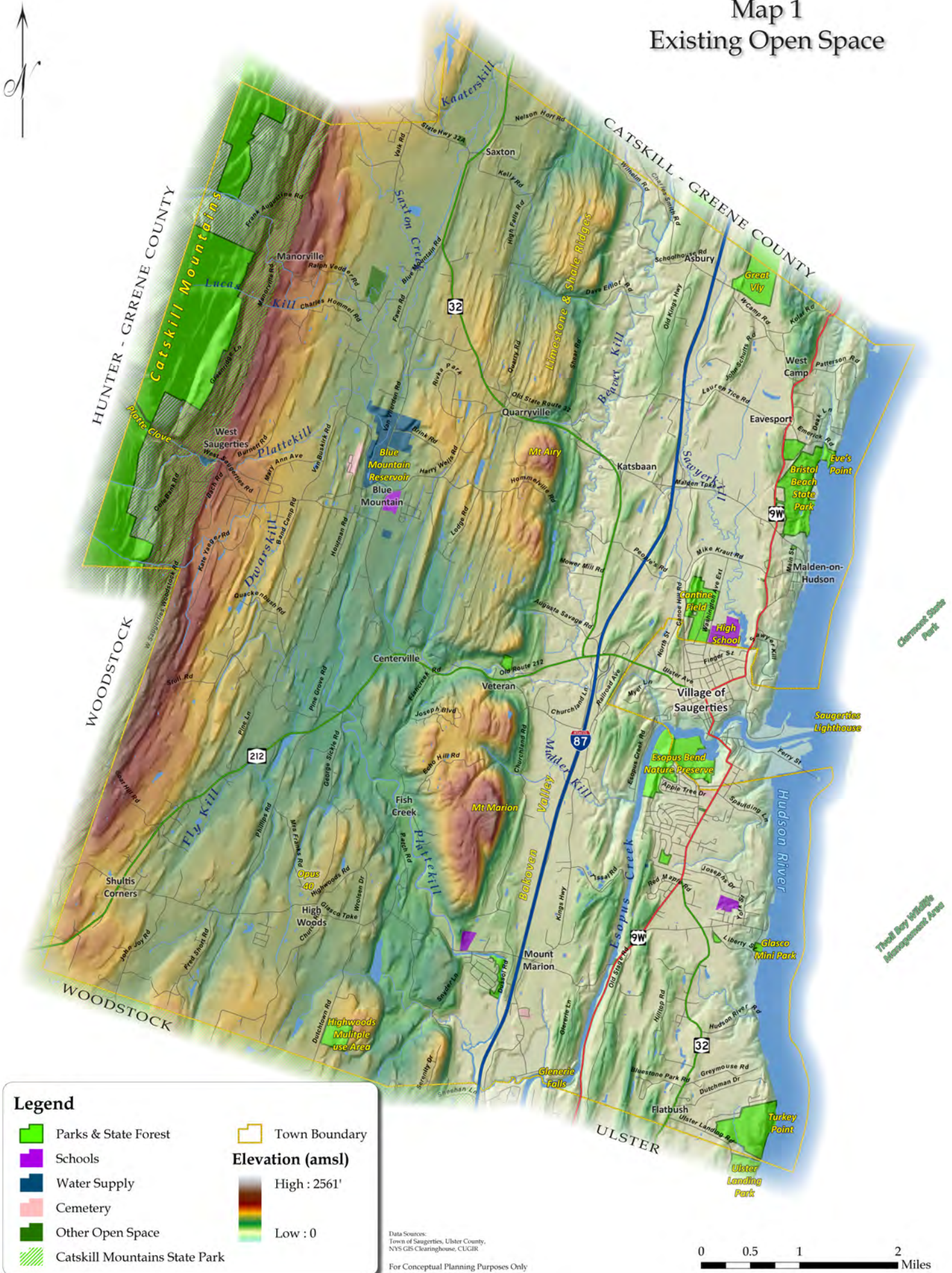
OTHER OPEN SPACE LANDS

The Village of Saugerties owns several parcels of land located in the Town of Saugerties at the **Blue Mountain Reservoir**. These lands help to maintain the water quality of the reservoir watershed. They are also used informally for fishing along the Plattekill.

The Esopus Bend Nature Preserve is a 161-acre preserve located at the bend in the Esopus Creek, between the Town and Village of Saugerties. The preserve has an extensive system of hiking trails where people can enjoy many different natural communities along a scenic area of the Esopus. The property is co-owned by the Esopus Creek Conservancy and the Catskill Center. Primary access is at the end of Shady Lane in the Barclay Heights neighborhood.

In addition to the publicly-accessible open space and park properties mentioned above, there are also a few **private properties with conservation easements** in Saugerties. To protect the privacy of property owners, we did not map or identify these properties specifically in this plan.

Map 1 Existing Open Space



Legend

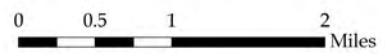
- Parks & State Forest
- Schools
- Water Supply
- Cemetery
- Other Open Space
- Catskill Mountains State Park
- Town Boundary

Elevation (amsl)

High : 2561'
Low : 0

Data Sources:
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County,
NYS GIS Clearinghouse, CLUGR

For Conceptual Planning Purposes Only



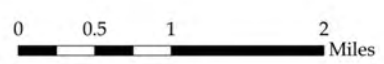
Map 2 Important Natural Areas



Legend

	Town Boundary		Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
	Parks & Preserved Land		Water celery
	Waterfowl Winter Concentration Areas		Water chestnut
	Stream Corridors	Important Natural Areas	
	Wetlands		Rare Species Habitat
	Tidal Wetlands		Physiographic Features
			Water and Wetland Areas

Data Source:
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County;
NYDEC Clearinghouse (CICR);
Saugerties Natural Area - Spider Hollow;
NYSDEC Natural Heritage Program;
NYS Hudson River Estuary Program



For Conceptual Planning Purposes Only

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

INTRODUCTION

The **Important Natural Areas** map on page 27 illustrates eight distinct areas in Saugerties that are important for biodiversity and natural resource conservation. Each of these natural areas has special features -such as the limestone woodlands associated with the Great Vly or the exceptionally productive tidal wetlands of the Esopus Creek mouth. Many of the river corridors in Saugerties provide connections for wildlife between the important natural areas, as do mountain passes, valleys, farm fields and, in general, any other areas where native cover still exists or has regenerated itself.

The information on the following pages has been compiled using data from various sources, including the NYSDEC Natural Heritage Program; communications and documents prepared by the Hudson River Estuary Program of the NYSDEC; personal communications with ecological consultant and Saugerties CAC member, James Barbour; and anecdotal information from town residents and CAC members.

The assessment of important areas in this section is based only on existing data. The natural communities of the town have not been extensively studied or mapped at this time. A comprehensive mapping and ecological assessment of the town would provide more information from which to evaluate conservation priorities.



Photo by George Heidcamp

There are many waterfalls and unique water features in Saugerties, especially in the Catskills and the surrounding foothills

CATSKILL MOUNTAINS

The **Catskill Mountains** are important for their large, unbroken forests that are embedded with lakes, rivers, wetlands, and vernal pools. The western border of Saugerties contains a small area of the northeastern portion of the Catskill Forest Preserve, owned and managed by NYSDEC.

Three forest communities have been mapped in the Saugerties portion of the Catskills: Chestnut oak forest; Hemlock-northern hardwood forest; and Beech maple mesic forest. Chestnut oak is the largest forest community in this area and serves as the matrix for other communities such as the hemlock-northern hardwood forest.

The Catskill Mountains are designated as a Significant Biodiversity Area (SBA) in the *Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Framework: an Approach for Conserving Biodiversity in the Hudson River Estuary Corridor* (the Framework). For the purposes of our plan, in the **Important Natural Areas Map**, the boundary of the SBA, as mapped in the Framework, was extended eastward to account for the rugged topography and high-quality habitat associated with the forests, wetlands, vernal pools, and ledges at the base of the Catskills in Saugerties.



Photo by George Heidcamp

A waterfall along the Plattekill in West Saugerties

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

The Catskill Mountains in Saugerties also contain several headwater streams, including the Lucas Kill, Fly Kill, and Saxton Creek, which flow into the Plattekill. Headwaters are the area where a stream begins. Headwater streams are often cool mountain streams that support trout and other cold water species. The headwaters also supply food and nutrients to downstream ecological communities.

The Lucas Kill and Saxton Creek flow into the Plattekill, which feeds the Blue Mountain Reservoir, a major drinking water source for the Village of Saugerties, as well as many town residents. The Plattekill originates deep in the Catskills, in the Kaaters Kill Wild Forest. The Plattekill is the largest tributary of the lower Esopus Creek. The Plattekill runs through the Platte Clove, forming a series of waterfalls before making its way to the wetlands at the reservoir. The Plattekill continues into a 30-foot wide creek in the agricultural areas of town before entering the Esopus Creek (the Esopus Creek then enters the Hudson River).

The Plattekill is a Class A trout stream above the Blue Mountain Reservoir and a Class B trout stream below the reservoir. Because the Plattekill enters the Esopus Creek, it is designated as part of the Hudson River Estuary. The Lucas Kill and the Saxton Creek are both Class A streams in this area, with some segments being trout spawning streams, according to the NYSDEC water quality classification standards. The Fly Kill is a Class C trout stream through most of its length in Saugerties.

The Protect the Plattekill Creek & Watershed board (PPCW) is involved in the protection of the Plattekill watershed as well as in coordination between the town and the Hudson River Watershed initiatives. Because the Plattekill is prone to flooding, the PPCW is also involved in flood protection initiatives, working with state and federal agencies. The Plattekill watershed is an important limiting factor to the growth of Saugerties because much of the new development depends on the purchase of water from the village from this essential watershed. The NY Supreme Court set a limit to the amount of water that can be drawn from the Blue Mt. Reservoir to 1.8 million gallons a day. Both the *Groundwater Protection Plan for the Town of Saugerties* (2005) and the *Source Water Protection Plan for the Village of Saugerties Public Water Supply* address the Plattekill and its watershed as part of a critical water supply.

In addition to being an important water resource, there are 4 historic mills on the Plattekill. It provides extensive opportunities for trout fishing and recreation.

Species that have been documented in the Catskill Mountains, according to the NYS Natural Heritage Program, include the northern red salamander, spotted salamander, black rat snake, northern ringneck snake, and northern copperhead. The area also contains habitat for timber rattlesnake (a NYS threatened species). See the map on page 31, which illustrates areas in Saugerties that could potentially be important for the timber rattlesnake.

The Catskill Mountains area is sparsely developed in Saugerties and serves as an important transition and buffer area to the Catskill Forest Preserve. Logging, mining, and development are the primary concerns because these practices can fragment forests and disturb habitats. Other concerns for the future are the possibility of invasive species and pests such as the gypsy moth and the hemlock woolly adelgid. The lands within the Catskill Mountains are sensitive habitat and special attention should be given to land use as well as the form of development that occurs within this area.

The lands within the Catskill Mountains are located primarily in two town zoning districts: low-density residential (LDR) in the north and medium density residential (MDR) in the south, with a minimum lot area of two-acres and one-acre respectively. The northern part of the Catskill Mountains is also within the sensitive area overlay in which the minimum lot area is double that of the underlying district. Neither of the zoning districts permit mining. The primary concern with the allowed density in this area is the potential for fragmentation of forests as large lots become subdivided or developed into smaller lots. While this may not seem like a major problem, cumulatively, a landscape of two or four-acre lots, with access roads, can fragment the forest landscape, and may also change drainage patterns and disturb wetlands and vernal pools. The town's conservation subdivision regulations should be used to encourage development that limits fragmentation and minimizes pavement, among other conservation goals.



An illustration of a timber rattlesnake (left) and the potentially important areas for timber rattlesnakes, based on land use cover and data from the NYSDEC Natural Heritage Program
 Illustration source: Online Art. Britannica Student Encyclopædia. 5 June 2009 <<http://student.britannica.com/eb/art-67274>>

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

High-quality wetlands, both permanent and seasonal, are located throughout the Catskill Forest important area. Many of these small wetlands do not fall under the jurisdiction of the NYSDEC because they are smaller than the 12.4 acre threshold. While they may be mapped through the National Wetland Inventory and fall within the jurisdiction of the USACOE, this does not explicitly protect the wetlands from alteration or filling. Special attention should be given to ensuring that these wetlands are not disturbed or altered. They should be given adequate buffer space and upland habitat needed for amphibians and other wetland and vernal pool breeding species.

Conservation priorities in this area include the headwaters of Fly Kill, Lucas Kill and Saxton Creek; the Platte Clove area; gaps and buffers of the Catskill Forest Preserve, and high-quality wetland and vernal pool complexes

WATER QUALITY CLASSIFICATIONS

Throughout this chapter, water quality classifications are referred to when discussing the streams in Saugerties. Water quality classifications are developed by the NYSDEC and indicate the best use of a water body based on the quality of the water. The following is a short summary of the meaning of the classifications for fresh waters:

1. *The classifications A, AA, A-S and AA-S indicate a best usage for a source of drinking water, swimming and other recreation, and fishing.*
2. *Classification B indicates a best usage for swimming and other recreation, and fishing.*
3. *Classification C indicates a best usage for fishing.*
4. *Classification D indicates a best usage of fishing, but these waters will not support fish propagation.*

Waters with classifications AA, A, B and C may be designated as trout waters (T) or suitable for trout spawning (TS). These designations are important in regards to the standards of quality and purity established for all classifications. See the DEC Rules & Regulations and the Water Quality Standards and Classifications page on the NYSDEC web site for information about standards of quality and purity.

These classifications do not reflect ecological quality, but rather suitable use of the water for drinking, swimming, boating, fishing and shellfishing. However they may indirectly indicate habitat quality.

Source: excerpted from: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/imsmaps/ERM/streamsRiversLakesPonds.htm>

WETLAND CLASSIFICATIONS

The Freshwater Wetlands Act (FWA), Article 24 of the Environmental Conservation Law, gives the NYS DEC the authority to regulate freshwater wetlands in New York. The Freshwater Wetlands Act protects wetlands larger than 12.4 acres in size, as well as some smaller wetlands of unusual local importance. The law requires DEC to map and classify wetlands that are protected by the Freshwater Wetlands Act. The classifications for these wetlands are based on a number of factors including cover type, ecological associations and other special features. Mapped wetlands can range from Class I to Class IV, with Class I providing the most benefits and thus subject to the most stringent standards. Around every regulated wetland is an adjacent 100-foot buffer which is also regulated by the DEC to help protect the wetland.

GREAT VLY-SAWYERKILL

The **Great Vly** is a circumneutral bog lake located at the northern border of Saugerties and the Town of Catskill. According to Hudsonia, a circumneutral bog lake is a “spring-fed, calcareous water body that commonly supports vegetation of both acidic bogs and calcareous marshes.” This is a rare habitat type in the Hudson Valley and it is known to support many rare species. The wetland area consists primarily of open water, cattail marsh, common reed marsh, and shrub swamp with buttonbush alder and water-willow. The Great Vly is one of the largest wetlands in Saugerties (and continues into the Town of Catskill) that is mapped and regulated by the NYSDEC. It is a Class III wetland.

The Great Vly is embedded between two ridges composed of limestone woodlands and calcareous cliff communities with bedrock outcrops. The limestone woodland is characterized by conifers and hardwoods on shallow soils over limestone bedrock. The Great Vly is a winter waterfowl concentration area. The tawny emperor butterfly has also been documented in several locations along the ridges and limestone outcrops surrounding the Great Vly.

The **Sawyerkill** originates in Catskill, in the limestone ridges just north of the Great Vly. It parallels I-87 for several miles before turning east to flow into the Hudson River near the mouth of the Esopus Creek. On its way, the Sawyerkill passes through residential and agricultural land uses, as well as lands operated by HITS, Inc. and Lehigh Portland Cement Company.



The Great Vly is one of the largest wetlands in Saugerties. It is owned and managed by New York State as a wildlife management area where hunting, fishing, bird watching and other recreational activities are allowed

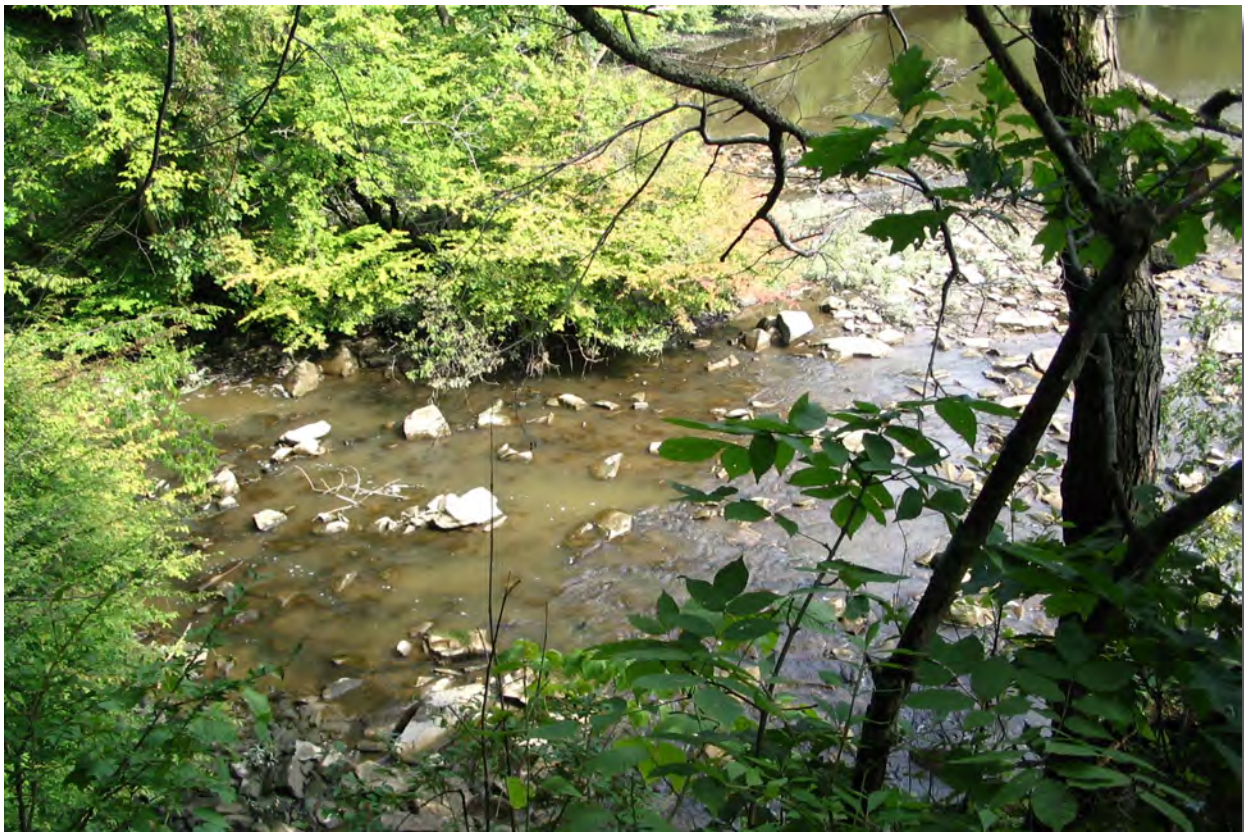
IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

There are many wetlands, large and small, associated with the Sawyerkill corridor, including a large 162-acre wetland complex near Eavesport, a Class III wetland according to NYSDEC.

The Sawyerkill is classified by the NYSDEC as a Class C stream. The Sawyerkill may be compromised with pollutants from I-87, as well as from agricultural uses. Because the Sawyerkill enters the Hudson River near the mouth of the Esopus, an ecologically significant area, it is important to conserve buffer lands along the river corridor. The parcel of land located at the mouth of the Sawyerkill has been conserved through a cooperative effort between the landowners and Scenic Hudson.

Land use and management practices along the corridor that help to provide large buffer areas and maintain riparian wetlands should be implemented to improve the quality of the water in the Sawyerkill before it reaches the Hudson River near the mouth of the Esopus Creek. Additionally, there are cleared areas along the river that might be good candidates for a tree planting program. The NYSDEC's **Trees for Tribs** program provides native trees, and assistance with planting, for tributaries of the Hudson River.

Conservation priorities in this area include lands that surround the Great Vly, which would help to improve the quality of the wetland, as well as lands adjacent to the Sawyerkill.



The outlet of the Sawyerkill at the Hudson River. This property is protected with a conservation easement

LIMESTONE AND SHALE RIDGE

The **Limestone and Shale Ridge** is a regional physiographic feature that begins at Albany County in the north (the Helderbergs) and continues south through Greene County (Potic Mountain) and northern Ulster County (the Hoogebergs). In Saugerties, the Ridge is a north-south feature with steep east-facing slopes that traverse the center of the town, parallel and west of I-87. It includes two local landmarks in Saugerties: Mt. Airy and Mt. Marion.

In Saugerties, the Limestone and Shale Ridge is primarily composed of sandstone (bluestone) and shale. Several natural communities have been mapped along the ridge in Saugerties, including a 170-acre Chestnut oak forest complex, a 10-acre red maple-blackgum swamp, and several vernal pools. New York State Natural Heritage Program records indicate the presence of several rare plants and animals, including green rock-cress, a NYS threatened vascular plant, and two rare invertebrate animals. The limestone part of the ridge (the Kalkbergs) provides unique habitats and also serves as an important conduit for water transport.

The Limestone and Shale Ridge is designated and mapped as an SBA in the Framework. In the Important Natural Areas Map, we have extended the southwestern portion of the boundary of the SBA west to encompass a NYSDEC multiple-use area that is known to include four rare sedges; a private nature sanctuary; a large Class II DEC wetland; and several tributaries of the Plattekill. The northern red salamander has been documented along the Plattekill, a tributary of the Esopus Creek.



*Green rock-cress is a vascular plant found on the limestone and shale ridge
Photo by David Werier; Courtesy of the New York State Natural Heritage Program*

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

The land uses along the ridge are primarily residential in nature, with some small-scale agricultural uses. There are many large-acreage parcels with limited residential development at present. The steep topography may present some constraints to development of this area. The majority of this important area is within the town's Medium Density Residential zoning district, which has a minimum lot area of one acre (increased to two acres within the Sensitive Area Overlay). Even with this overlay, this is a pattern that could be unsustainable if manifested across the landscape, particularly given the importance of the area for rare species and ground water recharge. Also, the southwestern portion of this important area is not included within the Sensitive Area Overlay.

The property known locally as the Winston Farm (the site of Woodstock '94) is the largest parcel located along the Limestone and Shale Ridge at close to 800 acres. Development of this parcel has been discussed over the years although no plans have been finalized or approved to-date. A consortium, including the Town of Saugerties, Ulster County and the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation, is currently investigating the feasibility of high technology development at the Winston Farm site.

Given the unique geological nature of the Limestone and Shale Ridge, a more thorough assessment of the natural communities is necessary and should be prioritized. The Hudson River Estuary Program offers grants for mapping and assessment of natural communities, and partners with Hudsonia, Inc. to provide a comprehensive Biodiversity Assessment Training course which trains local volunteers to assess biodiversity. A team of volunteers has taken this training in Saugerties and can perhaps be utilized to work on this assessment.

Conservation priorities in this area include the headwaters of the Beaver Kill; the riparian buffers of the Plattekill and associated wetlands; high ridge cliff-and-talus areas; and the rocky habitats and limestone areas of the ridges. Further assessment is needed to prioritize habitats for rare plants and animals.



The Catskills are visible along Dave Elliot Road, which traverses the Limestone and Shale Ridge

KAATERSKILL WETLANDS

Located in the northwest section of the Town of Saugerties, adjacent to the Towns of Hunter and Catskill, is a small but significant segment of the **Kaaterskill**.

The Kaaterskill (also called Kaaterskill Creek) is a Class B trout spawning stream that originates deep in the Catskill Forest Preserve and flows north to empty into the Catskill Creek and then the Hudson River at Catskill in Greene County. Associated with the Kaaterskill in this area are the Kaaterskill Wetlands, a 196-acre Class II DEC wetland, as well as many smaller wetlands that have been mapped as part of the National Wetland Inventory.

A large portion of the land in this area is in agricultural use. Agricultural areas are permeable to wildlife, often linking higher-quality habitats in adjacent areas, and may themselves provide habitat or refuge for many species.

This area also contains significant wet meadow areas, which have the potential for rare wetland plants and animals according to the NYSDEC. Management of pesticides and agricultural runoff, as well as runoff from roads, is important for maintaining the quality of the wetlands and the Kaaterskill. It is also important to manage invasive species, which often get dispersed along major roads such as Route 32 and make their way to the wetlands and streams.

Conservation priorities in this area include the agricultural areas with associated Kaaterskill corridor, including the wetlands, creek, and surrounding lands.



The Kaaterskill follows the perimeter of these farm fields. Route 32 is the straight line in the left of this image

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

BEAVER KILL CORRIDOR

The **Beaver Kill** is a major stream connecting the Hudson Valley Limestone and Shale Ridges to the Hudson River Estuary via the Kaaterskill. The headwaters of the Beaver Kill originate in Saugerties. Tributaries that feed the Beaver Kill originate in small valleys within the Limestone and Shale Ridges near Saxton, Quarryville, and Centerville.

The Beaver Kill is a Class C stream with a wide floodplain and a meandering channel. It contains several rare plants and animals. Although there are no large DEC-regulated wetlands associated with the Beaver Kill, there are many small wetlands mapped through the National Wetland Inventory along the corridor.

Land uses along the Beaver Kill Corridor are primarily residential and agricultural. There are many large, mostly undeveloped parcels in single ownership along the corridor.

Management of agricultural runoff as well as general household runoff is important for the preservation of water quality in this corridor. Protecting small wetlands is also important in this corridor.

Conservation priorities in the Beaver Kill Corridor include lands surrounding the Beaver Kill, especially those containing wetlands.



Photo by Anita F. Barbour

Riparian vegetation surrounding the Beaver Kill helps to keep the stream healthy and provides habitat for many different species that use the river corridor

HIGH WOODS

In the southwest corner of Saugerties, between the Catskill Mountains and the Limestone and Shale Ridges, is a sparsely developed landscape of high-quality Appalachian Oak-Hickory forest. This area contains historic quarries, rock exposures, significant wetlands, and intermittent woodland pools. It contains regionally significant populations of eastern hognose snake (NYS Special Concern Species), northern copperhead, and falcate orangetip butterfly (NYNHP rank S3S4, moderately rare, near northern range limit).

The **High Woods** area is zoned primarily for Moderate Density Residential (MDR), which allows for a minimum lot area of one-acre. A 1-acre pattern in this area can lead to fragmentation of land, which can have impacts on the wildlife and natural communities in the area. Unlike other areas of Saugerties, this area is not within an aquifer or sensitive area zone, which would give some additional protection. The town requires conservation subdivision practices for subdivisions of 10 or more lots from a parent parcel and this would help to conserve valuable resources in this area.

The High Woods area contains a large number of small, unprotected wetlands, both ephemeral and permanent which serve as habitat for vernal pool breeding species such as amphibians and reptiles. The area is forested (as the place name High Woods might suggest) and contains some of the largest blocks of forest in Saugerties.

Conservation priorities in the High Woods area include wetland/surface water complexes, including intermittent woodland pools; rock outcrops; and habitat for rare, endangered, and threatened species.



The Appalachian oak-hickory forest in the High Woods area contains some of the largest blocks of unfragmented forest outside of the Catskills Photo Courtesy of the New York State Natural Heritage Program

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

LOWER ESOPUS CREEK CORRIDOR

The **Esopus Creek** is a major tributary of the Hudson River. It originates in the Catskill Mountains and is broken up into a lower and upper reach for discussion purposes. The **Lower Esopus Creek Corridor** begins at the Ashokan Reservoir in the Town of Olive. It flows east and north through the Towns of Marbletown, Hurley, and Ulster before reaching Saugerties.



All of the streams in the Lower Esopus Watershed eventually drain into the Hudson River in the Village of Saugerties. Pollution that happens upstream of Saugerties can be carried through the town and into the Hudson River - Map Source: Lower Esopus Watershed Partnership <http://loweresopuswatershed.org/Site/Images.html>

In Saugerties, the Esopus Creek is a Class B stream until it reaches the Cantine Dam (Village of Saugerties), where it turns into a Class C stream. Below the dam, the creek is tidal. The Plattekill, a major tributary, flows into the Esopus Creek near Glenerie Falls. There are two areas along the Esopus where fish passage is blocked: Glenerie Falls and the Cantine Dam.

The 161-acre **Esopus Bend Nature Preserve** is owned by the Catskill Center and managed by the **Esopus Creek Conservancy**. The preserve is located at the bend in the Esopus, and straddles both the Town and Village of Saugerties. The preserve contains a unique shale rock gorge and a 50-acre Class II DEC wetland as well as many unusual habitats and uncommon species, and offers recreational and educational opportunities.

Between Glenerie Falls and the Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, the Esopus Creek forms a narrow, steep valley. Glenerie Falls is one of the town's most treasured landmarks. The falls are located on privately-owned land which used to house the Ulster White Lead Company.



An aerial view of the Esopus Bend Nature Preserve shows a large block of forest surrounding the Esopus Creek and adjacent wetlands

The **Lower Esopus Watershed Partnership** is an intermunicipal collaboration of watershed communities that was formed after the flood events on the Esopus in April 2005. The Partnership has commissioned a

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

reconnaissance report of the Esopus Creek, as well as a fly-over video of the entire Lower Esopus Creek, from the Ashokan Reservoir to the Hudson River, both funded by the Hudson River Estuary Program. The report and flyover can be found at www.loweresopuswatershed.com.

Existing land uses along the Esopus Creek in Saugerties are primarily low-density residential and agricultural uses, with the exception of the King's Highway Industrial Area, the high density of development in the Barclay Heights neighborhood, and a high density of riverfront cottages along Esopus Creek Road.

Conservation priorities in the Esopus Creek Corridor include Glenerie Falls, lands located near the mouth of the Esopus Creek, and the riparian areas surrounding the Esopus Creek.



Glenerie Falls is a series of five separate steps which drop a total of 70 feet within a length of 2,000 feet.

HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY

An “estuary” is a place where salt water and fresh water meet. The Hudson River Estuary is a prominent regional landmark that forms the eastern boundary of Saugerties. In addition to being an important cultural and scenic resource, the Hudson River is a NYS Significant Coastal Fish & Wildlife Habitat; it is also identified in the Framework as an SBA. The Hudson River estuary is exceptionally large, extending from the New York Harbor all the way north to the Troy Dam.

The mouth of the Esopus Creek, where it meets the Hudson River, contains the largest tidal wetland in town, a 130 acre complex. The complex includes about 55 acres of freshwater intertidal mudflats and 20 acres of tidal swamp and marsh. Rare plants have been documented in this area, including the Hudson River water nymph, an endemic species (one that is only found in association with the Hudson River). The tidal area of the mouth of the Esopus is an anadromous fish concentration and waterfowl winter concentration area (an anadromous fish is one that ascends a river to spawn, such as salmon). The tidal portions of the Hudson River Estuary are also home to the shortnose sturgeon (NYS and Federally-Endangered Species).



*The Shortnose Sturgeon is a resident of the tidal portions of the Hudson River, the only place it is found in NY
Scan by New York Natural Heritage Program of color plates in 1930's publications of the Biological Survey of New York State*

Large beds of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) are located off the shores of the Hudson River. In Saugerties, SAV beds are primarily water celery, a native and beneficial plant. Within Saugerties, only one small area of the invasive water chestnut has been mapped off the bank of the Hudson River just south of the Esopus Creek mouth. Water chestnut has also been documented in the area of the Esopus Creek behind the Cantine Dam (opposite the village beach).

Several large parcels of land have been purchased and preserved along the Hudson River, including Turkey Point, Bristol Beach State Park, and Eve's Point.

Conservation priorities in this area include the lands surrounding the mouth of the Esopus Creek (and the adjacent tidal wetlands); lands that would enlarge or extend existing protected areas (such as Eve's Point and Turkey Point); and the lands surrounding the streams and drainage channels that enter the Hudson.

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS



Where the Esopus Creek enters the Hudson River there is a large cluster of tidal wetlands, including a freshwater tidal swamp and freshwater intertidal mudflats



Looking down the Hudson River from Eve's Point

GRASSLAND, SHRUBLAND AND WETLANDS

In addition to the areas identified on the **Important Natural Areas Map**, there are several other important natural communities or habitats. These include grasslands and shrublands; wetlands and vernal pools; and forests.

GRASSLANDS AND SHRUBLANDS

Grasslands and shrublands are important habitat for many different species. For example, birds such as the American kestrel, bobolink and savannah sparrow use grasslands and open fields for various purposes. Many reptiles, butterflies and invertebrates also depend on grassland and shrubland habitat for part or all of their life cycle. Grasslands and shrublands have not been extensively mapped in Saugerties but they do exist throughout the town. Abandoned farm fields grow into grasslands and shrublands over time.

WETLANDS AND VERNAL POOLS

Mapped **wetlands** are shown on the Important Natural Areas Map on page 27. NYSDEC regulates wetlands 12.4 acres or more by requiring a permit, and typically a 100-foot buffer around the wetland is required. At the federal level, the Army Corps of Engineers regulates the filling of “waters of the United States” pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. A 2001 court case weakened the protection of “isolated wetlands” - those that are not geographically connected to navigable waterways. In addition, federal wetlands regulations do not require a buffer zone; they do however require permitting as well as mitigation for filling of wetlands.



The eastern box turtle is one of many species that depend on vernal pools and wetlands

There are 878 acres of wetlands regulated by the NYSDEC in Saugerties. There are another 1,152 acres of wetlands mapped by the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) that do not overlap with the NYSDEC wetlands. These NWI wetlands, when “isolated,” are generally not protected from alteration or filling, and do not require any protective measures.

In addition to the mapped wetlands in Saugerties, there are many vernal pools. **Vernal pools** are seasonal bodies of water that are often filled in the spring with snow melt or runoff. Because these small pools are typically dry by summer, they do not support fish populations and therefore offer breeding grounds for invertebrates and amphibians where there is no threat of fish predation. They are highly productive and important for biodiversity; yet they are small and only seasonally wet. Thus vernal pools are very vulnerable to development and alteration. Sometimes people are not even aware that they exist. Many of the species that depend on vernal pools also rely on upland habitat adjacent to the pools. Thus it is as important to establish protective upland buffers around the vernal pools as it is to protect the pools themselves.

IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

FORESTS

From the Catskills to the riparian forests of the Esopus Creek, **forests** are part of the essential character and ecology of Saugerties. The forests were, in fact, the reason why many people first settled in Saugerties - the Palatines for the pine tar and pitch; and the early industrialists for the proximity of waterways (for timber mills) to timber sources. **Over 80% of Saugerties is covered with forest.**

Forests provide many benefits to Saugerties including recreational opportunities (fishing, hiking, hunting, etc.); forest products such as paper, wood, and maple syrup; and critical ecosystem services such as maintaining water quality, recharging aquifers, and regulating stream flow. Forests help to remove pollutants from the environment and they store carbon dioxide and ameliorate the effects of climate change. Forests also provide the type and scale of habitat necessary to support and contain natural processes of ecosystem maintenance, including forest fires. Some plants and animals, including rare species, depend on such processes to survive. Sustainable hunting and fishing is important to ensure the health of forests and forest streams.

The **Forests map** and accompanying classification of forest blocks on the following pages illustrate the extent of forest cover in Saugerties and explain the significance of various sizes of forest cover. This map can be used to help guide conservation development to encourage preservation of large blocks of forest as well as stepping stone forests – small forest areas that are located close enough to one another to provide pathways, or “stepping stones” for wildlife.

The area identified as “Globally Important” forest blocks are also included in New York State’s Open Space Conservation Plan as Priority Open Space Conservation Projects, specifically the Overlook Mountain Wild Forest and the Catskill Escarpment North. As such conservation projects within the Globally Important forest blocks should be eligible for additional state funding.

There are two primary concerns related to the forests in the Town of Saugerties: fragmentation of forests and unsustainable forest management practices.

Development (such as buildings and roads) can fragment forests, breaking large areas of forest up into smaller pieces and creating impermeable barriers (such as roads) for many different types of wildlife. When a development is proposed in Saugerties, special consideration should be given to location and design of development in order to minimize the fragmentation of forests.

Recent studies also indicate that forest fragmentation may play a role in the proliferation of lyme disease. A study published in the February 2003 journal *Conservation Biology* reported that “patchy” forests may have more disease-carrying ticks than larger forest blocks, according to research conducted in Dutchess County.

Map3 Large Forest Blocks



- Forest Cover
 - Wetlands
 - Forest Blocks
 - G#** Globally Important - > 15,000 acres
 - R#** Regionally Important - 6,000 - 14,999 acres
 - L#** Locally Important - 2,000 - 5,999 acres
 - S#** Stepping Stone - 200 - 1,999 acres
- # refers to the numbers on the map - e.g. G# refers to G1 and G2

Globally important: These large and intact forest ecosystems support characteristic, wide-ranging and area-sensitive species, especially those that depend on interior forest. Globally important forests are large enough to express a range of forest successional stages over time, including areas that have been subjected to recent large-scale disturbance such as blowdowns and fire, areas under recovery, and mature areas. These forests also provide sufficient area to support enough individuals of most species to maintain genetic diversity over several generations. The Catskills are a globally important forest.

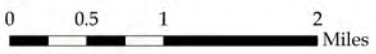
Regionally important: These are forest blocks greater than 6,000 acres that provide habitat to more area-sensitive species and can accommodate the large-scale disturbances that maintain forest health over time.

Locally important: These are small but locally important forest ecosystems, often representing the lower limit of intact, viable forest size for forest-dependent birds. Such bird species often require 2,500 to 7,500 acres of intact interior habitat.

Stepping stone forests: These smaller forest ecosystems, when configured as broad corridors (not just narrow strips), provide connections to larger patches of habitat.

Forest classification and definitions adapted from the Orange County Open Space Plan, June, 2004; with assistance from the Hudson River Estuary Program

Data Sources:
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County,
NYS GIS Clearinghouse, CUGIR
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IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS

Across the Town of Saugerties, as well as most of the country, the management of forests has been implemented in a piecemeal and fragmented manner. Timber harvesting practices are not coordinated between landowners and across parcels of varying ownership. Most landowners do not have a long-term plan - instead they often cut the best wood and leave the rest behind. This is not the best financial option for the landowner; nor is it the best ecological solution for the forest.

Very few of the town's landowners currently participate in **New York State's Forest Tax Law (480a)** which offers a tax incentive for landowners who agree to the use of sustainable forestry practices. Sustainable forestry practices should be promoted in Saugerties, through the New York State Forest Tax Law (480a program) and its incentives, as well as through the distribution of educational and informational materials. The minimum threshold to participate in this program is 50 acres.



FOREST BLOCKS IN SAUGERTIES

Globally important (greater than 15,000 acres): These large and intact forest ecosystems support characteristic, wide-ranging and area-sensitive species, especially those that depend on interior forest. Globally important forests are large enough to express a range of forest successional stages over time, including areas that have been subjected to recent large-scale disturbance such as blowdowns and fire, areas under recovery, and mature areas. These forests also provide sufficient area to support enough individuals of most species to maintain genetic diversity over several generations. The Catskills are a globally important forest.

There are two globally-important forest blocks in Saugerties: G1 encompasses the western boundary of the town and is contiguous to the Catskill Park boundary; G2 is in the southeast part of town, between Route 212 and Churchland Road, and includes parts of the High Woods Important Area and the Limestone and Shale Ridges.

Regionally important (6,000-14,999 acres): These are forest blocks greater than 6,000 acres that provide habitat to more area-sensitive species and can accommodate the large-scale disturbances that maintain forest health over time.

There is one regionally-important forest block in Saugerties. R1 is located along the southeast border of Saugerties and extends south along the Hudson River into the Town of Ulster.

Locally important (2,000-5,999 acres): These are small but locally important forest ecosystems, often representing the lower limit of intact, viable forest size for forest-dependent birds. Such bird species often require 2,500 to 7,500 acres of intact interior habitat.

There are three locally-important forest blocks in Saugerties: L1 is between Route 32 and Old King's Highway on the Limestone and Shale Ridge in the north central area of town; L2 is between Route 212 and Route 32 on the Limestone and Shale Ridge in the geographic center of town; L3 is located in the southeast part of town along the Esopus Creek between Route 9W and Route 32.

Stepping stone forests (200-1,999 acres): These smaller forest ecosystems, when configured as broad corridors (not just narrow strips), provide connections to larger patches of habitat.

There are 10 existing stepping stone forests located in Saugerties; most are located along the Esopus Creek, Sawyerkill, and Hudson River in the eastern part of town.

Forest classification and definitions adapted from the Orange County Open Space Plan, June, 2004; with assistance from the Hudson River Estuary Program

BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS FOR LDR AND MDR DISTRICTS

In a build-out analysis, a community's development potential is fully maximized based on what the community's zoning allows. Development constraints, such as steep slopes and wetlands, are also usually considered. Essentially, a build-out analysis is a snapshot of what the future of a community could look like once all available land is fully developed. It is important to stress the conceptual nature of such an analysis. For instance, the results can vary greatly, depending on the assumptions and inputs that are used. Moreover, it is not possible for any build-out analysis to account for the infinite range of "real world" events and trends that the future may bring. Nonetheless, a build-out analysis can be useful for predicting the amount and location of future development and related impacts to a community, such as demands on public infrastructure and potential impacts to open space resources. Lastly, the build-out analysis can help a community better grasp the long-term implications of its zoning and land use regulations. This is especially true for communities where development occurs relatively slowly and in a piecemeal fashion and where it is often difficult to perceive from year-to-year the changes that development brings. Through the build-out analysis, a community can look into the future and more fully understand the cumulative, long-term impacts of such development.

For the purposes of the Saugerties Open Space Plan, a generalized build-out was conducted for two of the town's zoning districts- the Low Density Residential (LDR) and Moderate Density Residential (MDR) districts. These districts were selected because most of the town's natural and agricultural resources are located within them.

The results of the build-out analysis are pictured in the maps on pages 51 and 53. **Overall, the town could see another 5,900 residential units in the MDR and LDR districts.** For reference, there were 8,257 housing units in the Town of Saugerties according to Census 2000. Therefore, the build-out of just these two zoning districts (not the entire town) could increase the number of residential units in the town by 70%.

Although most areas of the LDR and MDR districts experience increased development in the build-out analysis, the southwest area of

BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

A limited build-out analysis was completed using CommunityViz® GIS software. The build-out analysis for the LDR and MDR districts primarily factored in development constraints and zoning regulations, including maximum densities and minimum setbacks. Existing homes were also included in the analysis for setback and density determinations. Development constraints that were defined in the analysis as non-buildable include steep slopes (greater than 25%), all mapped wetlands (state and federal), the 100-year floodplain, and all water bodies (rivers and streams). After the removal of constraints approximately 2,150 properties were considered to have some level of development potential. Per the town's zoning regulations, subdivisions that would result in more than 10 homes, or more than 5 homes in the overlay districts, were reanalyzed using a conservation subdivision approach - approximately 400 properties fell into this category. Since it was impossible at this level to conduct site analysis on each of the conservation subdivision parcels to determine an appropriate design, agricultural soils were used as areas to be protected where applicable. On parcels without agricultural soils, or parcels that where agricultural soils covered the majority of the property, some manual adjustments to the areas "allowed" for development had to be made.

Map 4 Build-out Potential in the LDR and MDR Districts



Legend

• Potential Single-Family Home	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
 Not included in build-out	Water celery
 Town Boundary	Water chestnut
 Parks & Preserved Land	Important Natural Areas
Stream Corridors	Rare Species Habitat
Wetlands	Physiographic Features
Tidal Wetlands	Water and Wetland Areas

Date: 8/2015
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County
NYS GIS Clearinghouse, CIGIS
Significant Natural Areas - Spider Harbor
NYSDEC Natural Heritage Program
NYS Hudson River Estuary Program
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BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS FOR LDR AND MDR DISTRICTS

Saugerties, between the Catskill Mountains and the Limestone Ridge, experiences the most. Unlike other parts of Saugerties, there is no sensitive area overlay regulation in effect in this relatively undeveloped area. Notable resources found here include a large unfragmented forest block (see forest map on page 47), unique geology that supports many rare species, and the headwaters of many streams.

Other areas of Saugerties that could be impacted by the full build-out are as follows:

- 1,447 potential units in the Catskill Mountains Important Area (see the Important Area Map on page 27)
- 1,562 potential units in the Limestone and Shale Ridge Important Area (see the Important Area Map)
- 485 potential units on existing farms; or 1,281 units on prime and statewide important farmland soils

Although, as mentioned above, a build-out analysis is based on assumptions and represents a hypothetical scenario for the future, it is still useful to understand the full development potential. It may be a long time before Saugerties reaches its full build out, but knowing what could happen allows the town to evaluate the impacts and envision different alternatives. The build-out is a good reference point when developing updates to the town Comprehensive Plan (see page 88 for further discussion). It helps to provide a discussion piece for the community.

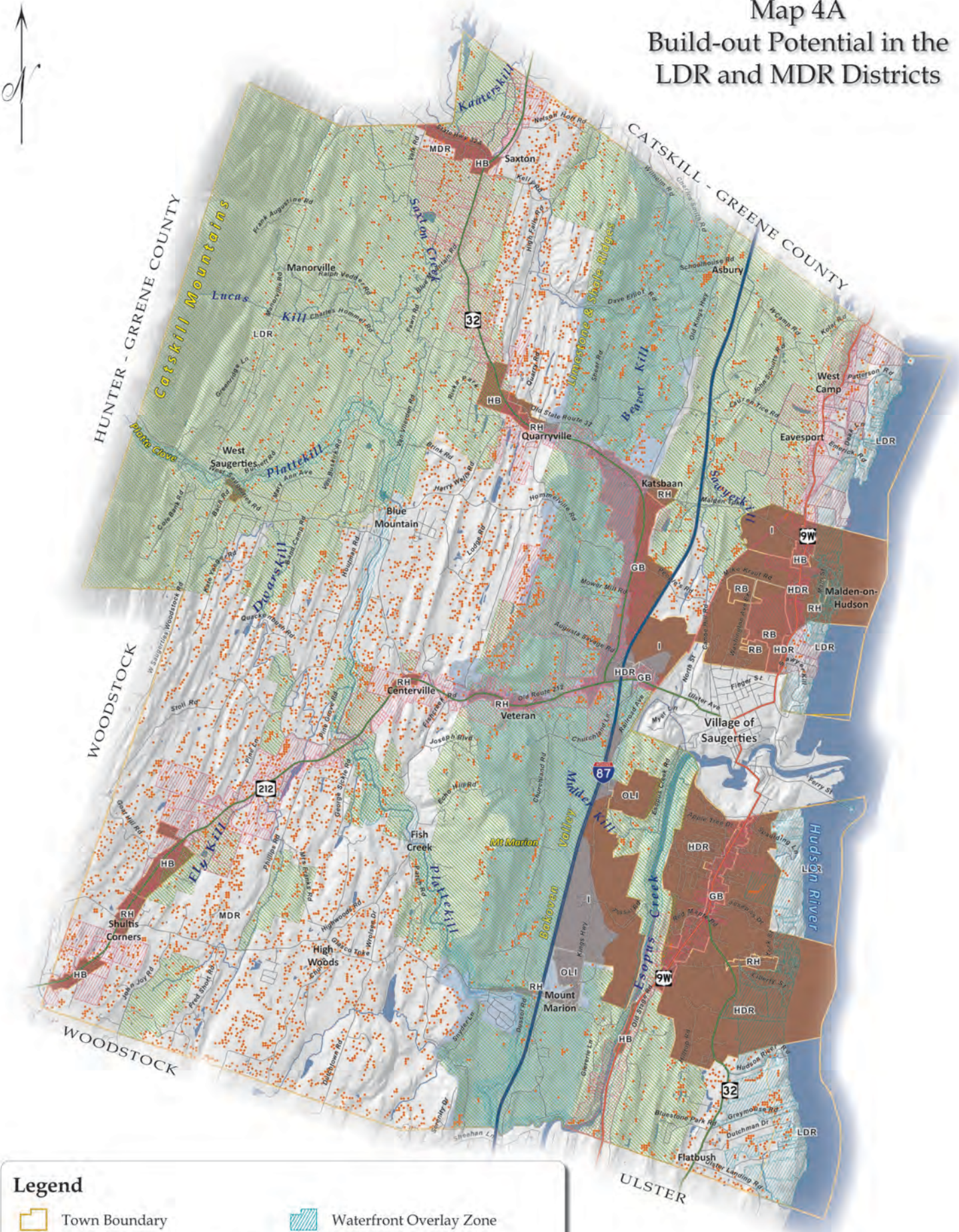
CONCLUSIONS FROM THE BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

- The southwest area of town is especially vulnerable to intensive development because it is not protected by the sensitive area overlay, yet there are many sensitive resources in this area.
- The density permitted in the MDR and LDR districts, even when the requirements of the overlay and conservation subdivision are applied, is likely to compromise the integrity of important natural and agricultural resources.
- The future build-out of the MDR and LDR districts could have significant impacts on the town's water resources, agricultural resources, scenic views, biodiversity, and rural and historic character. It could also result in economic impacts due to increased costs of services to town taxpayers.

NEXT STEPS

Completing the build-out for the other zoning districts in Saugerties (as well as for the Village of Saugerties) would help to provide a full snapshot of the future of the Saugerties community. A future build-out analysis should also include a carrying capacity analysis, with particular attention paid to built infrastructure systems and water supply and capacity. A fiscal analysis to accompany the build-out would help to document the costs to town taxpayers associated with future growth, and could also serve as the basis for exploration of alternatives desired by the community and the relative cost-benefits of pursuing them. See page 88 of this plan for more information on this topic.

Map 4A Build-out Potential in the LDR and MDR Districts



Legend

Town Boundary	Waterfront Overlay Zone
Potential Single-Family Home	Gateway Overlay Zone
Sensitive Area Overlay	Districts Excluded from Build-out
Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone	

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND SOILS

While agricultural lands constitute a relatively small fraction of the Town of Saugerties' land use, they represent a very important part of the economy and culture of Saugerties. Approximately 3,670 acres of land (8.7% of the town's land area) are in agricultural use in the Town of Saugerties. This figure is based on the land use classification code in the tax assessment data.

Most of the active agricultural properties are located in the northwest part of Saugerties known as the Saxton Flats, and in the Bakoven Valley-Saugerties Valley area in the central and eastern parts of town. These properties are illustrated on the **Agricultural Resources** map.

Agricultural uses are varied in Saugerties and include vegetables; small dairy; poultry and livestock; horse boarding; tree farming; and specialty crops such as garlic, mushrooms, and maple syrup.

A good amount of the agricultural land in Saugerties is also used to grow hay for feed, which is an important supporting agricultural use.

Another way to assess agricultural resources is to look at the prime soils in the town. Prime soils are lands that have the best characteristics for agricultural production with the least input - these are the best lands to grow high yields of crops. Prime soils can be thought of as our "land bank" for growing food. Prime soils are defined and mapped by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

About 5,000 acres of the land in Saugerties (or 12% of the town's land area) consists of prime soils. As Chart 1 on page 56 illustrates, there are currently 3,600 acres of prime soils in Saugerties that are not being used for agriculture. A large portion of these prime soils that are not being used for farming are located in the floodplains of the Plattekill, Saxton Creek, Sawyerkill and Beaver Kill. Some of these lands are post-agricultural (trees and shrub have grown in) and some have large-lot residential homes associated with the land. Most of the Village of Saugerties is also located in prime soils.

The farms in Saugerties are small when compared to other areas of New York State, such as western NY. The average size of a working farm in the Hudson Valley is



Photo by Joy Moore

Saugerties Farmers Market

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

- Active Agricultural Lands: 3,370 acres
- Land in Agricultural Districts: 3,787 acres
- Prime Soils: 5,000 acres
- Statewide Important Soils: 6,448 acres

Map 5 Agricultural Resources



Legend

- Town Boundary
- Agriculture Parcels
- Agricultural District
- Prime farmland soil
- Farmland soil of statewide importance

High quality soils are either defined as prime farmland soil or farmland of statewide importance. According to the National Soil Survey Handbook, prime farmland soil is defined as "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops," while farmlands of statewide importance are lands that are "nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods." More complete definitions can be found in the National Soil Survey Handbook.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2007. National Soil Survey Handbook, title 430-VI. [Online] Available: <http://soils.usda.gov/technical/handbook/>

Data Sources:
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County,
NYS GIS Clearinghouse, CUGIR

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AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

156 acres - according to a report by the Glynwood Center.¹ However, the report also notes that “more than half of the farms in the Valley are under 100 acres, with the majority of those farms ranging from 10 to 49 acres.” The report continues to note that farms in the Hudson Valley are predominantly owned by individuals and families, not large corporations. This is certainly true in the case of Saugerties, where almost all of the farms are owned by individuals and/or families. This information has specific implications for



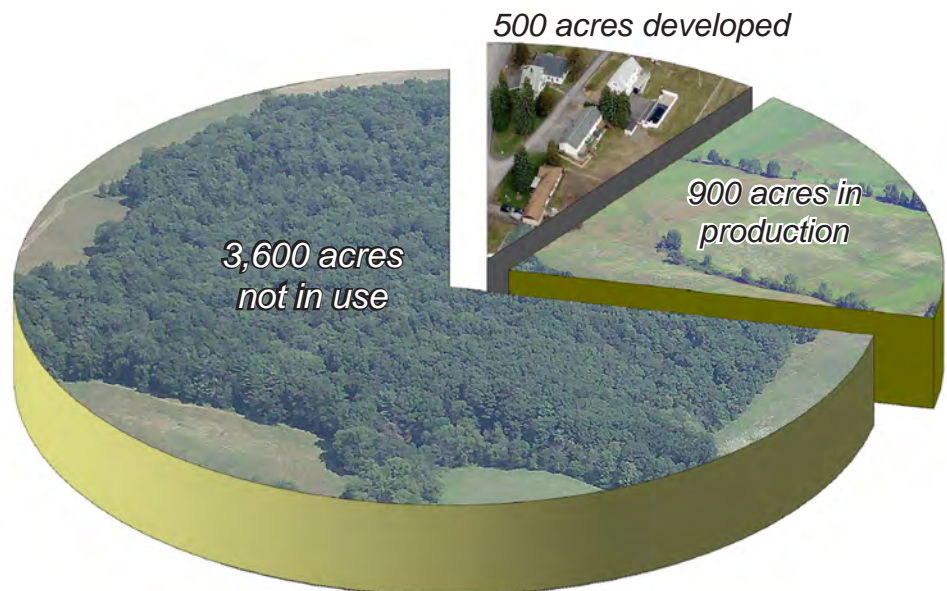
agricultural policy in Saugerties. It is important to understand that in order for individuals and families to retain small working farms, they need to have a supportive atmosphere for agriculture and they also need to be allowed to diversify their income, possibly even with non-farm business ventures. These topics are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.



An example Right-to-Farm Law sign

The Town of Saugerties recently adopted a Right to Farm Law. A Right to Farm Law is an important form of community support and endorsement for agriculture and agribusinesses that are enabled under New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25 AA. Specifically, Right to Farm Laws are legislative statements stating that sound farming practices cannot constitute a private nuisance. Some communities use signage to promote farm-friendliness and publicize to visitors that the right to farm law is in effect.

CHART 1: STATUS OF PRIME SOILS IN THE TOWN OF SAUGERTIES



IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE TO THE SAUGERTIES COMMUNITY

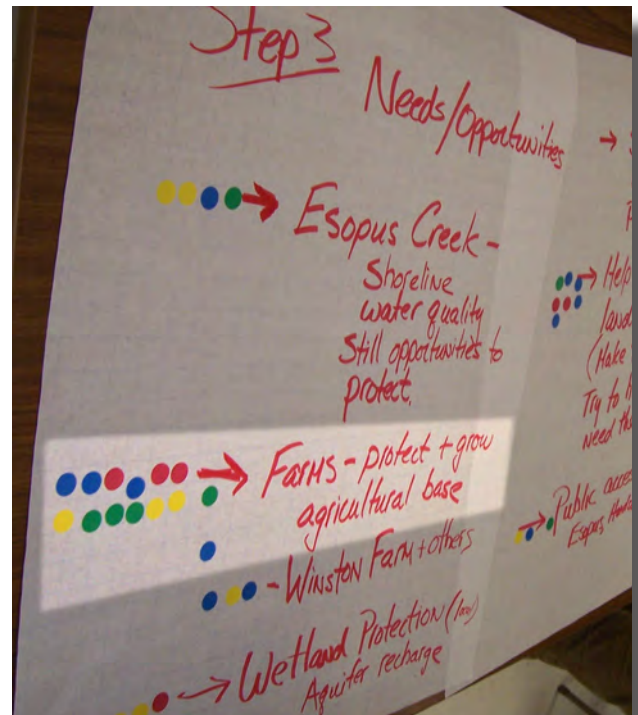
Agriculture is a very important contributor to the local economy, and supports a sustainable way of life for Saugerties residents. In fact, many of the farms in Saugerties sell direct to market - at farm markets and stands, or at the Saugerties Farmers Market. Agriculture also contributes greatly to the town's rural character, open space and quality of life.

INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN THIS OPEN SPACE PLAN AND THE TOWN'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING

The town's current zoning regulations do not fully recognize the importance of agriculture in Saugerties. For example, the purpose of the MDR district (where most agricultural lands occur) is to "extend the benefit of rural environment while living relatively close to educational, cultural, recreational, business, employment, transportation, and other compatible and interdependent land uses where county and state highways are easily accessible...." This purpose does not stress the importance of agriculture as a business, but rather, as an attractive backdrop to other land uses

Furthermore, although there are distinct areas of town where agriculture is the primary use, this is not reflected in the town's zoning district names. The zoning districts that contain the majority of the agricultural lands are considered "residential" districts. This distinction - though common in many communities- gives the appearance of agriculture as a transitional land use in a primarily residential area.

Lastly, the *Town and Village of Saugerties Comprehensive Plan (1999)* does not identify a specific goal related to the importance of agriculture to the economy and quality of life in Saugerties. Based on the input received during this planning process, agriculture is clearly an important land use in the community. Thus, one primary recommendation of this plan is that the town's comprehensive plan should be updated with respect to agriculture (as well as other elements discussed elsewhere in this plan).



At the first public meeting for the open space plan, when residents were asked to identify what topics are important by placing dot stickers next to them, many participants identified the "protection and growth of agriculture" as a priority

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

AGRICULTURAL LANDOWNER INPUT

On March 15, 2008 the town conducted a focus group meeting with Saugerties area farmers to discuss the opportunities and challenges they are facing. The following issues, concerns, and opportunities were raised at the meeting:

- Agricultural policies/subsidies that support large-scale farming rather than small-scale farming businesses
- Problems with flooding/drainage on agricultural lands
- Problems with wildlife on agricultural lands/destruction of crops
- Taxes/assessments making the value of land too high to be profitable for farming
- Neighbors complaining about agricultural practices
- High inheritance taxes making it hard to pass the farm on to the next generation

Many of the same challenges and concerns were raised during the meetings that were held for this open space plan, including a landowner focus group on February 19, 2009. The notes from the landowner focus group are included in **Appendix A: Summary of Public Comments and Focus Group Meetings**.



REVIEW OF THE TOWN'S ZONING REGULATIONS WITH RESPECT TO AGRICULTURE

As part of this open space planning project, the town's zoning regulations were reviewed to determine if they are farm friendly; and to identify any potential problems or changes that can be implemented to make the town more helpful and supportive of agriculture. A summary of the review is provided below.

EXISTING ZONING IN SAUGERTIES

Saugerties is divided into 9 different zoning districts. The zoning districts are primarily residential, business, and industrial in nature. There are also four districts that "overlay" the underlying zoning districts in certain areas where additional regulations are needed. Within the overlay districts, a property is subject to the regulations in the underlying zoning district, as well as the overlay regulations.

The vast majority of the town's agricultural parcels and undeveloped prime soils (potential agricultural lands) are located in the Moderate Density Residential (MDR) zoning district, with a smaller amount in the Low Density Residential (LDR) zoning district. In many cases, agricultural lands are also in the Sensitive Area (SA) and Aquifer Protection (AP) overlay districts. The LDR and MDR zoning districts cover a large portion of Saugerties, particularly the central and western part of town and the areas surrounding the village to the east.

FRONTAGE REQUIREMENTS

In the MDR and LDR zoning districts, a 125 and 150 foot minimum lot width is required respectively. In areas within these districts that are covered by the Sensitive Area Overlay, the minimum lot width is increased to 1.5 times the underlying district - to 188 and 225 feet respectively.

In some cases, the minimum lot area is not as much of a factor in determining development patterns as the minimum lot widths. In rural communities such as Saugerties, larger "estate" lots (such as 5-10 acres) are often easy for developers to sell and therefore the major factor in determining the

ZONING DISTRICTS IN SAUGERTIES

RESIDENTIAL:

LDR: Low Density Residential
MDR: Moderate Density Residential
HDR: High Density Residential
RH: Residential Hamlet

BUSINESS:

GB: General Business
HB: Highway Business
RB: Recreation Business

INDUSTRIAL:

I: Industrial
OLI: Office/Light Industrial

OVERLAY DISTRICTS (ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS)

GO: Gateway Overlay Zone
WO: Waterfront Overlay Zone
SAO: Sensitive Area Overlay Zone
APO: Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

configuration of lots is often the minimum lot width. It is quite common to see “frontage” development of long, skinny lots throughout the roads in Saugerties.

There are two main problems with this style of development. The first problem is the road frontage gets taken up by houses, isolating potentially productive “backlands.” The second problem is that it breaks up the land that is behind the houses in such a way that may eliminate potential farming. For example if there is a property with a large hay field that is subdivided into three long and narrow lots, and if two owners want to rent their land to a farmer, but a landowner in between them does not, it is not profitable for the farmer to use the two disconnected lots, and therefore farming on the land is abandoned. As fuel prices continue to rise, even seemingly minor irregularities in the shapes of fields can often render fields, or portions of fields, unusable from an economic standpoint, as fuel costs to plow and harvest may exceed the profit of the crop. By increasing frontage requirements and providing incentives to cluster off of the main road, development can be done in a way that better maintains agricultural viability.



An example of frontage development at the foot of the Catskills

WIND POWER/ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

Renewable energy (produced by the sun, wind, water, and crops) is expected to continue to be a growing business in the United States. Agricultural landowners can benefit from alternative energy by developing their own renewable energy sources. This may prove to be especially important as energy costs continue to rise. Some landowners may also be interested in investing in renewable energy production - for example by growing bioenergy crops.

The town may want to consider including small-scale alternative energy production (for residential and agricultural application) as an allowed use within the zoning regulations for the LDR and MDR zoning districts (as well as other relevant districts). One way to do this might be to adopt an ordinance that permits small-scale alternative energy infrastructure as long as it complies with siting guidelines and notification procedures. Structures should be sited to avoid impacts to scenic views and

environmental resources. Neighbors should be notified and have a chance to review and comment on plans. The height restrictions in the existing zoning should also be reviewed to ensure that they do not prohibit alternative energy structures.

Additionally, it would be helpful to identify one or several areas of the town that are suitable for more intensive alternative energy production (if one exists) - such as a wind or solar farm - and alter the zoning accordingly.

CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS AND PROCESS

The conservation subdivision process, which is required in the LDR and MDR districts, theoretically produces development patterns that are more considerate of resources than the conventional subdivision process. However, the process itself may not always help to preserve farmland. Even with a conservation subdivision, some land must be identified for a development site. The conservation analysis requires that all of the important resources on the site be identified and then a judgment call is made as to which of the resources are most important to preserve.

Often the agricultural lands and soils are left out of the conservation analysis, or their importance is marginalized in comparison to other resources. Also, because farmlands often make the best development sites (good soils and land already cleared), they are often identified up-front as the development site. This problem can be addressed by requiring that active farmlands and prime and statewide important soils be identified as lands of conservation value in the conservation analysis process. While the town's current regulations make reference to agriculture as a resource to be mapped, they do not specifically mention that active agricultural lands and prime soils should be clearly identified in the conservation analysis. Doing so would be important to the decision-making process.

LAND TRUSTS

Land trusts can play a critical role in the protection of farmland, including holding easements created as part of a conservation subdivision. Refer to page 96 for a further discussion of land trusts in the region.

Another potential problem with the conservation subdivision process is that while there are sometimes good intentions to preserve farmland within a project site, unusable fragments of farmland surrounded by residential development can sometimes result from a well-intentioned plan. If these farm lands are not usable, they will eventually go idle and may even go through the succession process and eventually become overgrown with shrubs and trees. The size of the land and the configuration of the property may dictate the type of agriculture that would be viable within a subdivision. For example, within a smaller tract of land that is surrounded by houses, a less intensive

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

type of agriculture such as sheep grazing or organic vegetables or fruit would be more viable. These issues can be addressed through the implementation of the conservation subdivision, by ensuring that there is a viable use, and potential farmer, for the agricultural land.

ALLOWED USES

It is important that agricultural landowners are allowed by right to conduct a wide variety of agricultural uses and accessory uses in a large area of town. The town's zoning regulations do already allow for a variety of agricultural uses and accessory uses. However, there are a few additions that might be considered:

- Roadside farm stands are permitted in all of the town's zoning districts however a maximum building size of 400 square feet may prohibit some landowners from using existing structures (such as barns) for such use. The town may want to explore the option of distinguishing between roadside farm stands and farm markets - the latter being more intensive and requiring site plan review to ensure that there is adequate parking, access, etc.
- Opportunities to further improve diversification for agricultural landowners in the LDR and MDR districts could be explored further and implicitly allowed in the LDR and MDR zoning districts. Some potential opportunities that could be explored include:
 - Metal shops and or woodworking/furniture-making in the LDR and MDR, with careful disposal of alloys and resins
 - Small-scale processing facilities, where the primary materials are grown on the farm and the manufacturing activities are small in scale (such as yogurt processing, cider mills, or wood processing)
 - Agritourism enterprises such as a corn maze, hay rides, and outdoor recreation could be specified as allowed uses in LDR and MDR as long as they are accompanied by a related agricultural use/working farm and provide for safe access and ample seasonal parking
 - Craft uses/workshops could be allowed in the LDR and MDR (they are currently allowed only in RH, GB and HB with Site Plan Review)

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The history of Saugerties is deeply rooted in the town's natural resources, which supported the settlement of the town and village, and the growth of the local economy. The town's name is derived from the Dutch term "Little Sawyer," a reference to the Dutchman Barent Cornelis Volge who operated a sawmill in the mid 1600s in the area. Early settlers to the area developed timber mills powered by the town's rivers and creeks. The Sawyerkill was one of the town's many waterways to power the timber mills. As settlers in the area cleared the forests to make room for agriculture, the timber mills were used to process the harvest to produce building materials.

The products of the pine forests were sought by the Palatines, some of whom emigrated to the Hudson Valley from the Rhine Valley of Germany in 1710. The Palatines were indentured to making naval stores for the British Fleet under Queen Anne of England. In Saugerties, the Palatines settled in an area called West Camp, on the west side of the Hudson River. They collected pine tar and pitch for shipbuilding. The Palatines were among the earliest non-native settlers to the town.



HISTORIC RESOURCES

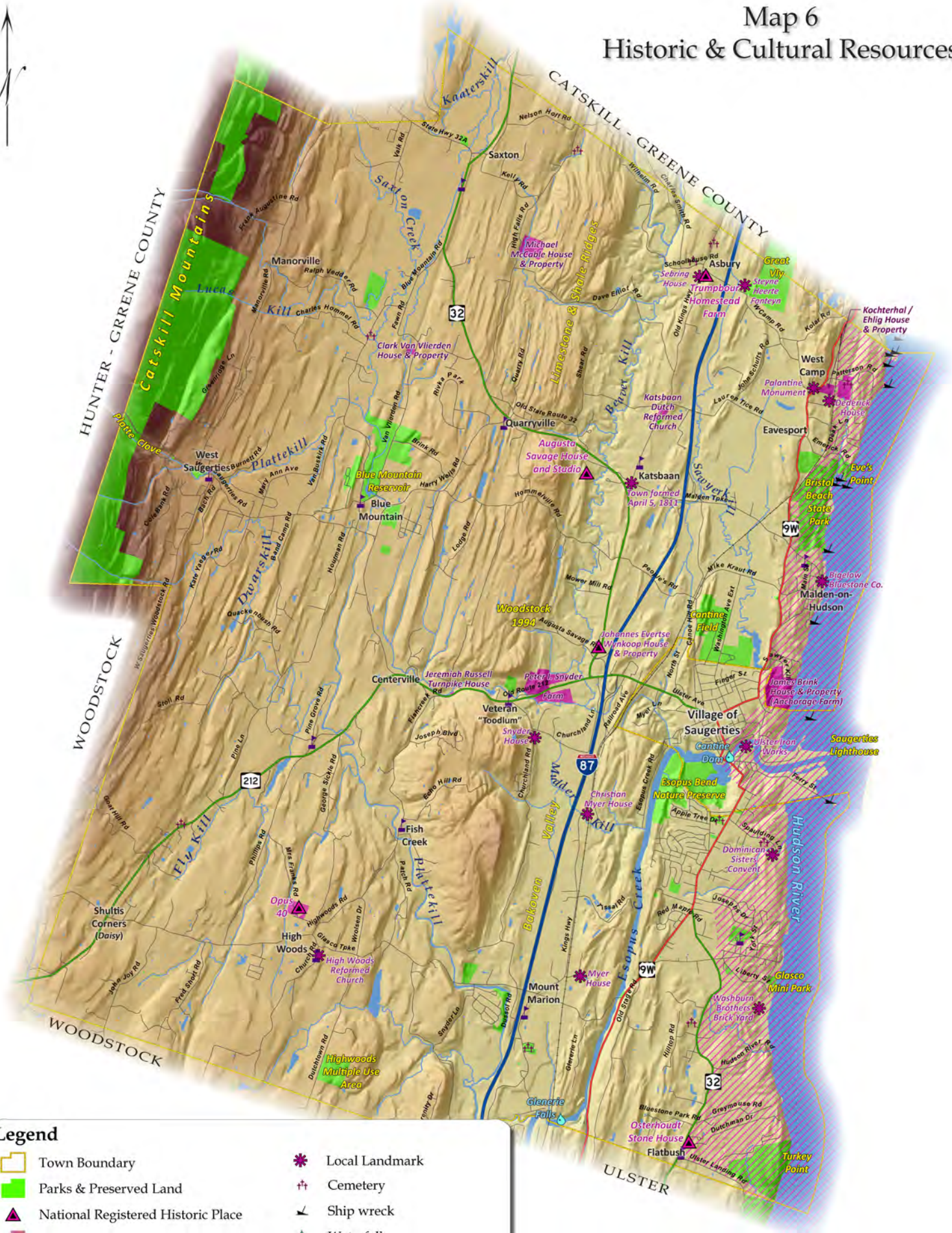
The town's waterways have been a significant element of its settlement and commerce throughout history. The Hudson River, the town's largest and most significant waterway, was a major means of transportation and became especially important after the Erie Canal opened up in the mid 1820s. Ice was also harvested from the Hudson River and the Esopus Creek, and there were ice houses located in Malden and Glasco.

The rivers also provided water power for industry in Saugerties. Henry Barclay was one of the first in the area to develop the waters of the Esopus Creek for industry. In the 1820s, as part of a plan to develop an industrial community, he established the Ulster Iron Works as well as a very important paper mill near where the Esopus Creek meets the Hudson River. After his death, Barclay's paper mill was rebuilt as the Sheffield Paper Mills. Today, a portion of the mill still stands and is reused as apartments for senior citizens. This is an exemplary adaptive reuse of an historic building.



Source: *Beers Atlas, County of Ulster 1875, Page 66*, retrieved from the *Ulster County Clerk Archives Division*, Online at www.co.ulster.ny.us/archives/Beers/page064.jpg

Map 6 Historic & Cultural Resources

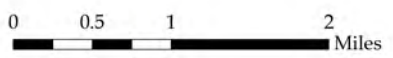


Legend

- Town Boundary
- Parks & Preserved Land
- National Registered Historic Place
- Locally-designated Historic Properties
- Historic School House
- Local Landmark
- Cemetery
- Ship wreck
- Waterfall
- Ulster-North Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

Data Sources:
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County,
NYS GIS Clearinghouse, CUGIR

For Conceptual Planning Purposes Only



HISTORIC RESOURCES

Other natural resources have contributed significantly to the economy of Saugerties over the years. Bluestone quarries supplied many businesses throughout the town and village. The stone was shipped all over the country, appearing in sidewalks, buildings and monuments. Limestone was used to make cement and cement products. Raw materials were used for brickmaking.

Resource-based sectors of the economy continue in the town today, but they employ a much smaller segment of the population than they have historically. For example, less than 1% of the town's population is employed in "farming, fishing, and forestry occupations," according to data from the 2000 census. The two occupations that employ the largest percentage of the town's population are "management, professional, and related professions" (32.4%) and "sales and office occupations" (26.6%), according to census 2000 data.

Today, the resources of Saugerties provide economic value in different ways. The real estate sector in the Hudson Valley benefits greatly from the town's resources, which attract many people interested in living in a rural, small-town setting. These resources are an amenity, contributing to the property values and quality of life in the town.

In addition, the resources provide many unmeasured values to the community. For example, the recreational opportunities such as fishing, kayaking, hiking, and biking offer the town's people relaxation, quality of life, and health benefits. They also attract tourists who come to spend time and money in Saugerties. There are many other benefits provided by the town's natural resources to consider for the future, among them energy production, food production, outdoor recreation, tourism, specialty agricultural niches, and sustainable building materials.

Several properties in saugerties are listed in the National Register, including Opus 40, the Wynkoop House, Augusta Savage House and Studio, and the Trumbour Homestead Farm. The Town of Saugerties also has an established Historic Preservation Commission in charge of developing tools to help preserve historic resources. In 2005, the Saugerties Historic Preservation Commission, with the assistance of grant from the Preservation League of New York State, documented many historic resources in Saugerties, including over 65 stone houses.

Through the Historic Preservation Commission, the historic resources within the town are being inventoried and several have been designated as local historic landmarks. Both National Register and Locally-designated properties are depicted on the Historic Resources Map.

Locally-designated Historic Properties:

Johannes Evertse Wynkoop House and Property

Designated on May 14, 2004

Kochterthal / Eligh House and Property

Designated on June 25, 2004

Katsbaan Dutch Reformed Church

Designated on December 27, 2004

Opus 40

Designated on December 27, 2004

Peter I. Snyder Farm

Designated on February 20, 2006

Jeremiah Russell Turnpike House

Designated on September 18, 2006

James Brink House and Property (Anchorage Farm)

Designated on November 15, 2007

Michael McCable House and Property

Designated on November 15, 2007

Clark Van Vlierden House and Property

Designated on November 15, 2007

STONE HOUSES IN SAUGERTIES

Many stone houses remain today as a vital element of Saugerties' history. A 2009 stone house tour guidebook organized by the Saugerties Historic Preservation Commission says the following about stone houses in Saugerties:

The original 1 1/2 story stone houses in Saugerties were built in a rural Dutch style of architecture, usually with fieldstone, limestone, or bluestone quarried on the property. The houses consisted typically of one room with a broad-breasted stone fireplace and an internal chimney, a cellar, a loft, and a gabled roof. All family living and business happened in this one room. The center of life was the hearth. Furniture was sparse and moved about to accommodate a variety of functions: food preparation, eating, meeting of guests, doing business, sleeping, etc. Of comfort, there was little.



The Mynderse House

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Recreation is an open space-related land use that is important to the Saugerties community. Getting outside to explore the town's open space lands is a vital way for people to learn about, and appreciate, open space. This fosters a strong connection between people and open space and results in greater appreciation of nature and its processes. Although all open space lands do not necessarily allow public access, the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River are two large areas that provide many opportunities for recreation in the town.

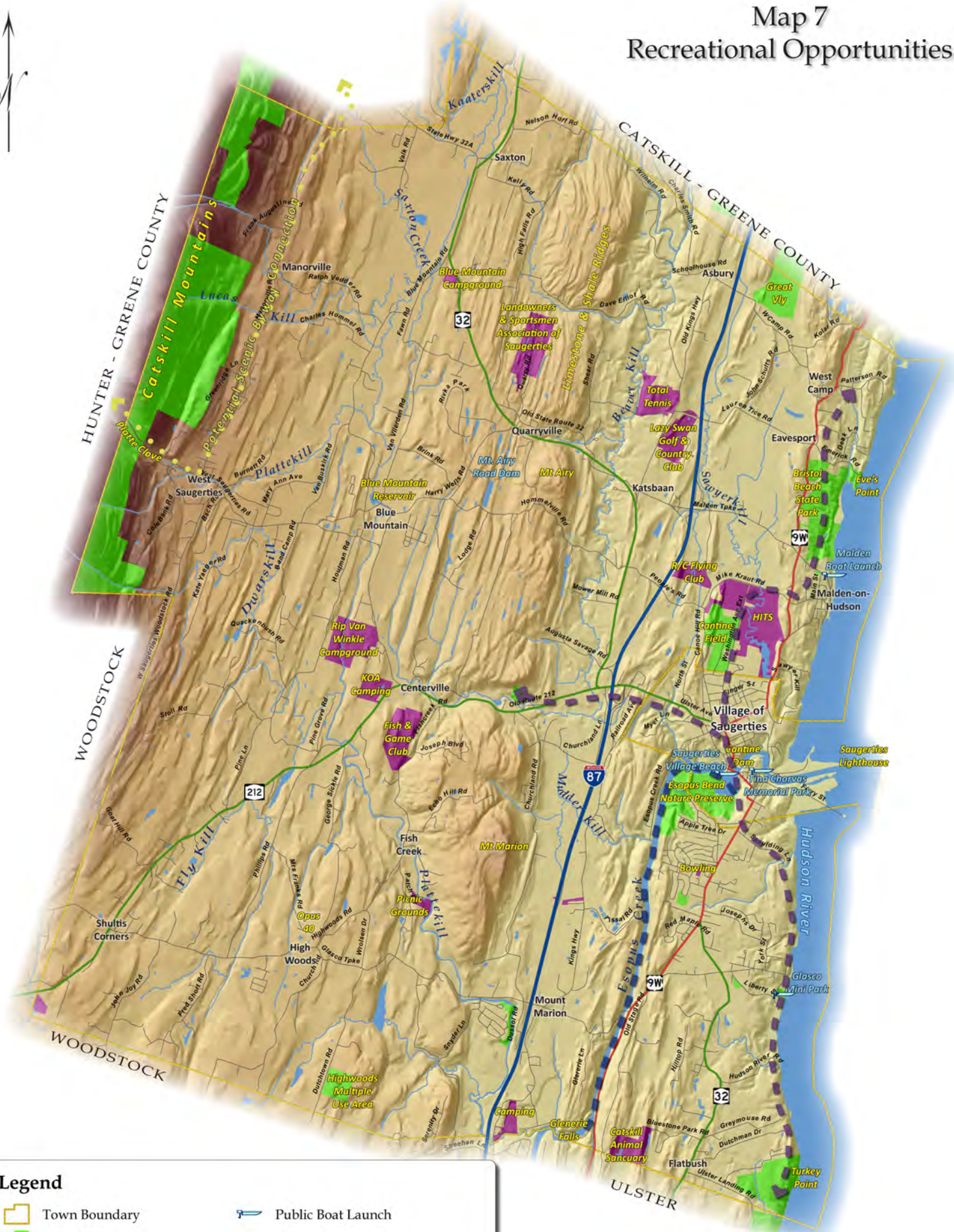
Other recreational amenities include public parks such as Cantine Field; the Blue Mountain Reservoir and many other streams and waterbodies in town; and private recreational areas such as campgrounds and sportsmens associations. Many of these recreational resources are illustrated on the Recreational Opportunities Map.

During meetings associated with this plan, several recreational needs and opportunities were discussed for Saugerties including the following:



- Developing a multi-use trail system in Saugerties, with a primary focus on the development of a Hudson River Trail; and connections to the Village, schools, and Cantine Park/HITS area
- Increasing access to the Hudson River
- Developing a plan for the use of Bristol Beach that is appropriate to the site's ecological and historical setting
- Establishing more bike routes throughout town
- Exploring the development of a network of equestrian trails
- Creating a water access/kayak trail along the Esopus Creek
- Increasing opportunities for scenic overlooks and parking areas along existing roadways in Saugerties
- Establishing a loop connection between the Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway in the Town of Hunter and the Town of Saugerties along West Saugerties Road, Manorville Road, and Route 23A in Catskill
- Designating scenic roads and creating overlook access areas to provide areas for observation of open space and natural areas along roadways

Map 7 Recreational Opportunities



Legend

- Town Boundary
- Parks & State Forest
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Public Boat Launch
- Potential Esopus Creek Water Trail
- Potential Hudson River Trail

Data Sources:
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County,
NYS GIS Clearinghouse, CUGIR
For Conceptual Planning Purposes Only

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

CONNECTING CHILDREN & NATURE

An extensive body of research indicates that direct experience in nature is important to the development of children in just about every way - emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually to name a few. The Esopus Creek Conservancy offers many opportunities and programs for children to learn about nature. The Children & Nature Network is a national movement focused on reconnecting children with nature. The Children & Nature Network website is a great source of information for current news, research, and practical steps that communities can take to reconnect children with nature.

Below is one study that is reported in Children & Nature's research volumes:

OUTDOOR LEARNING ENHANCES SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT, SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-DISCIPLINE

Nature-Smart Kids Get Higher Test Scores

The American Institutes for Research® conducted a study, submitted to the California Department of Education, of the impact of weeklong residential outdoor education programs. The focus was on at-risk youth, 56% of whom reported never having spent time in a natural setting. Comparing the impact on students who experienced the outdoor education program versus those in a control group who had not had the outdoor learning experience, results were statistically significant. Major findings were: 27% increase in measured mastery of science concepts; enhanced cooperation and conflict resolution skills; gains in self esteem; gains in positive environmental behavior; and gains in problem-solving, motivation to learn, and classroom behavior. (Original Research)

Source: "Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California." American Institutes for Research: Palo Alto, CA: 2005. Available on the Sierra Club web site. http://www.sierraclub.org/youth/california/outdoorschool_finalreport.pdf

Children & Nature Website: www.childrenandnature.org

Esopus Creek Conservancy Website: www.esopuscreekconservancy.org



Right: Kids watch a replica of the Half Moon pass through Saugerties as part of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial celebration. Henry Hudson sailed the original Half Moon up the Hudson River in 1609.

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a global issue but the impacts will be felt locally in our cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods. This open space planning process provides a chance to document opportunities where the conservation of open space may help Saugerties adapt to climate change or mitigate the effects of flooding and other impacts associated with climate change.

According to the NYSDEC's Hudson River Estuary Program, the following trends expected in the Hudson River Valley in the future are associated with climate change:

- Shorter, warmer winters and longer, hotter summers will affect local farmers and winter recreation, and may increase diseases carried by insect populations as they shift northward.
- Rising sea levels and strong storms will cause localized floods and threaten shoreline infrastructure and development.
- Rising summer air temperatures will increase pollution-related asthma and heat exhaustion, especially in urban areas.
- Invasive species and nuisance plants will thrive under elevated atmospheric CO2 levels.

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

"Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). Climate change may result from:

- natural factors, such as changes in the sun's intensity or slow changes in the Earth's orbit around the sun;
- natural processes within the climate system (e.g. changes in ocean circulation);
- human activities that change the atmosphere's composition (e.g. through burning fossil fuels) and the land surface (e.g. deforestation, reforestation, urbanization, desertification, etc.)"

Source: USEPA website, Climate Change, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html>, accessed on March 5, 2009

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

CONSERVING FLOOD-PRONE LANDS

In Saugerties, several waterbodies that enter the Hudson River (namely the Esopus and Sawyerkill), have dramatic topography that also exacerbates the flow of water. It is likely that the flat areas, wetlands, low-lying floodplains, and bends along these rivers will be inundated more frequently and severely in the future due to climate change. This presents an opportunity to conserve these lands, which are also biologically significant, to hold and store water associated with flooding. Conserving these lands can also help to protect infrastructure (such as roads) and homes from inundation.

PROVIDING ROOM FOR NATURAL COMMUNITIES TO MIGRATE

One concern raised by scientists is that natural communities may begin to migrate in order to adapt to changing climate. Where natural communities are surrounded by development, they may not have room to migrate. Therefore, it is important to conserve lands adjacent to significant natural communities to allow the space that is necessary for migration in the future. One example is the tidal wetland at the mouth of the Esopus Creek, which currently provides habitat for a number of rare species. Because of the proximity to the Village of Saugerties to the west, there is little room for this wetland to migrate - therefore the undeveloped lands adjacent to this wetland area should be prioritized for conservation.



The wetlands near the mouth of the Esopus Creek are expected to be level with the Hudson River in the future due to climate change

ADAPTING AGRICULTURE

Scientists are studying the possible impacts of climate change on agriculture. We do not know exactly how agriculture will be affected, but it is likely that agricultural practices will also need to adapt to a changing climate. Growing seasons may be shorter or longer, and droughts and flooding may be more severe. This may require adaptation in the types of crops planted as well as in growing practices. This offers an opportunity for farmers and others involved in agricultural research and products to rethink agriculture, and may provide opportunities for diversifying and expanding the local food market. It is also important to ensure that lands with good soils and growing conditions are reserved for the future.

PROTECTING DRINKING WATER

Saugerties residents obtain drinking water from two primary sources: the Blue Mountain Reservoir and watershed, or a local groundwater source (wells). It is unclear how the town's reservoirs and ground waters will be affected in the long and short term due to climate change. This topic is currently the focus of much research. However, this will likely be a concern and the town and village should continue to monitor and protect their water supplies for the future. Longer aquatic growing seasons associated with warming can also cause a shift in algae to undesirable species which could affect water quality.

The *Town of Saugerties Ground Water Protection Plan* (2005) identifies land use/regulatory actions that can be taken to protect groundwater, as well as proactive opportunities to purchase land or conservation easements in critical areas. These strategies are all complementary with the open space plan and should continue to be implemented. Likewise, the town and village should actively pursue land conservation (acquisition of land or conservation easements) in the areas surrounding the Blue Mountain Reservoir. This is also a high-priority recommendation of the *Source Water Protection Plan* for the Village of Saugerties Public Water Supply.

PRESERVING FORESTS

Forests are a priority resource identified and mapped in this plan because of their vast, unfragmented cover in the town. Forests not only help to sequester carbon, they help to remove pollutants from the air and absorb flood waters, thus mitigating the effects of climate change.

Climate change policies currently being developed at the regional and global levels are primarily focusing on energy efficiency and clean energy alternatives, because they are long-term solutions. However, trees and forests can play a major role in helping us adapt to climate change on a global level, lessening the immediate impacts. According to a report from the Wilderness Society, forests in the United State currently capture about 10 percent of the carbon released from use of fossil fuels (in the US). And there is potential for forests to capture more carbon, with the use of reforestation and management techniques. Presently, the focus of the revenues from carbon cap and trade market is focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency strategies. However, there may be opportunities in the future for investment in forest offsets. Considering the role forests play in defining the town's character and environmental health, as well as the economic and recreational benefits, their conservation should be prioritized for multiple benefits.

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

CONTROLLING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES

With climate change is the potential for more intensive exposure to invasive species and other damaging pests. The town's natural communities should be regularly monitored for invasive species, especially rare and sensitive habitats that are vulnerable to invasive species or pests.



Photo by Barry Benepe

Purple loosestrife is an invasive plant that is commonly found in Saugerties.

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

The following areas should be considered when identifying land for conservation measures in Saugerties because they will also help to protect or mitigate the effects of climate change.

- Low-lying shoreline areas such as the lands near the Mouth of the Esopus Creek; as well as the Malden and Glasco shoreline areas. These areas are most likely to be inundated by flooding.
- Lands that can help to buffer existing preserved areas such as the Esopus Bend Preserve and Bristol Beach.
- Wetland systems, which help to naturally recharge ground water and decrease storm water runoff.

CONCLUSION

This chapter documents the most current understanding of the open space resources in the Town of Saugerties. It provides a solid foundation for the town to refer to when making decisions about land use, land development, and conservation. It is apparent by looking at the maps in this chapter that the Town of Saugerties is replete with important open space areas and resources. Understanding the importance of these resources to the community is the subject of the next chapter of this plan which identifies visions, goals, and strategies for open space in Saugerties.



CHAPTER 3
VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter of the open space plan provided a lengthy discussion of the open space resources in Saugerties. This chapter provides a synthesis of the vision for the future of Saugerties in terms of open space, and sets forth guidance on the goals and strategies suggested to preserve and maintain open space in Saugerties. The vision, goals, and strategies are based on input from the public meetings, focus groups and CAC guidance, and reflect community values towards open space. Following the discussion of visions, goals, and strategies is a summary of the next steps needed to advance the plan.



Photo by George Heidcamp

Sunrise over Malden

OPEN SPACE VISION FOR SAUGERTIES

When communities plan for the future, they often develop master plans that lay out where they want to locate future roads, neighborhoods, commercial areas, and other types of development. Sometimes this process includes the identification of parks or other protected features. Rarely, however, does a community create a master plan for preserving what already exists – their natural and agricultural systems. The first step towards creating this plan is identifying the systems that are important to the community’s long-term environmental, social, and economic health. The open



space vision map does just this. It identifies the important natural areas, agricultural resources, historic and recreational resources and systems of the town’s landscape. Expressing this vision is the first step towards ensuring that these resources are maintained for future generations.

The open space vision for Saugerties include the following major important areas:

- The Catskill Mountains
- Limestone and Shale Ridges
- Hudson River Corridor
- Important Waterways
- Core Farming Areas in the Bakoven Valley and Saxton Flats

Also illustrated on the vision map are several priority projects that would help to enhance community access to open space and instill appreciation and respect for the town’s many open space resources. The projects are listed below.

- A master plan (in partnership with New York State OPRHP and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) for Bristol Beach to improve access and use of the land
- A potential Esopus Creek Water Trail
- A potential Hudson River Trail
- A potential connection to the Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway in Hunter

Town of Saugerties Open Space Plan

Vision Map

Planning Concepts

Bristol Beach Plan

Develop a Master Plan to Increase Access to Bristol Beach and Preserve Historic and Ecological Resources

Hudson River Trail

Develop a continuous trail to provide access to and between public parks, neighborhoods and hamlets, and historic attractions

Esopus Creek Water Trail

Create a series of water access points to provide access to the Esopus Creek for kayaking between Glenerie Falls and the Cantine Dam

Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway Connection

Work with the towns of Hunter and Catskill to develop a Saugerties connection to the Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway

Core Farming Areas

Bakoven Valley-Saugerties Valley and the Saxton Flats

- Prime soils and areas of agricultural production
- Economic, scenic and environmental benefits to the community
- Local food and agricultural products



Saugerties Farmers Market Photo by Joy Moore

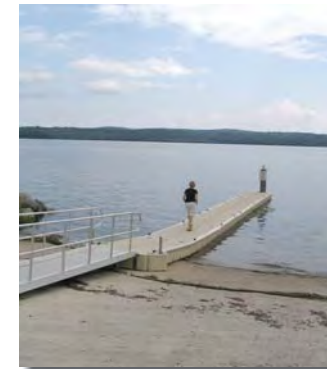


The Saxton Flats

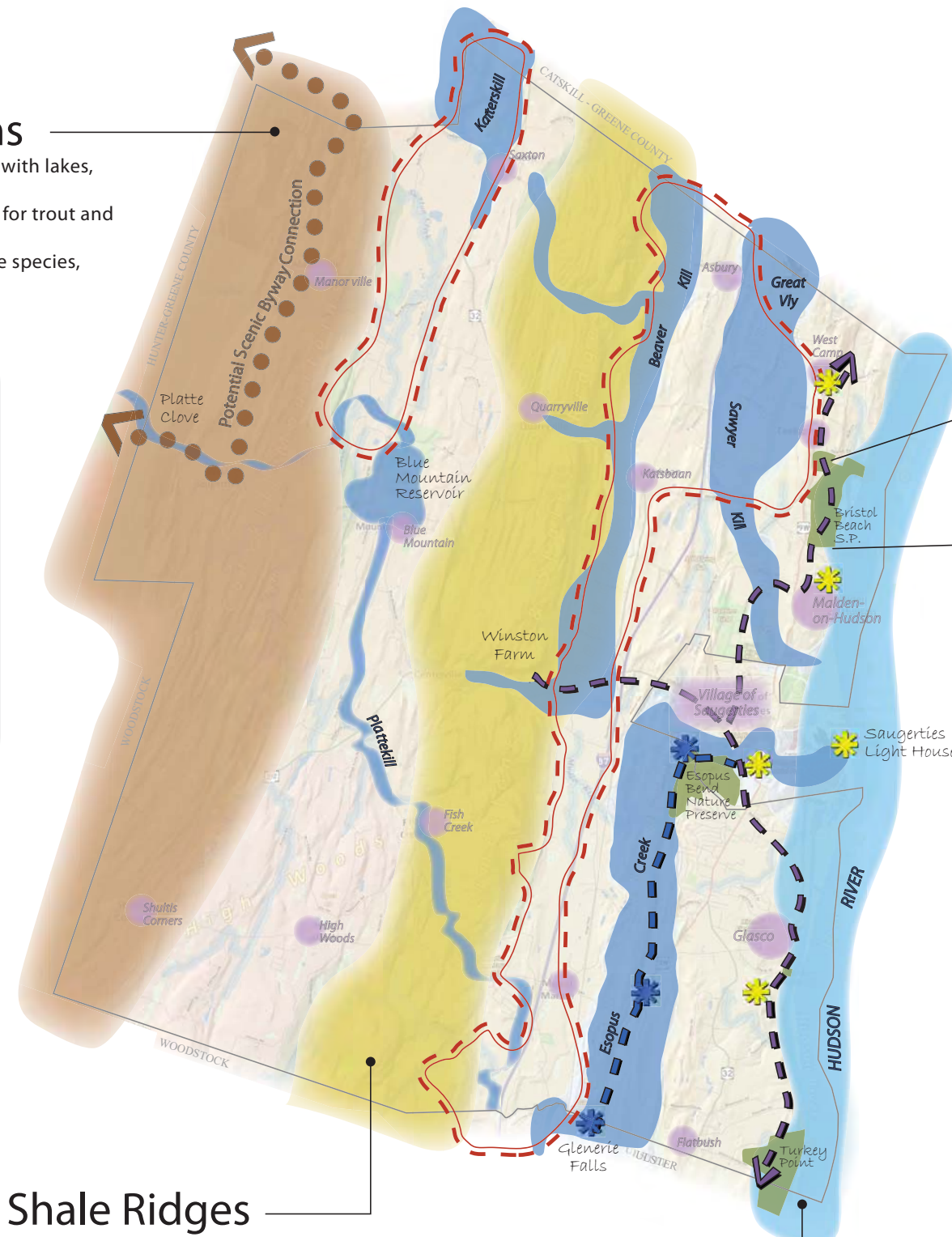


Bristol Beach Area

Bristol Beach



Boat launch at Glasco



Legend

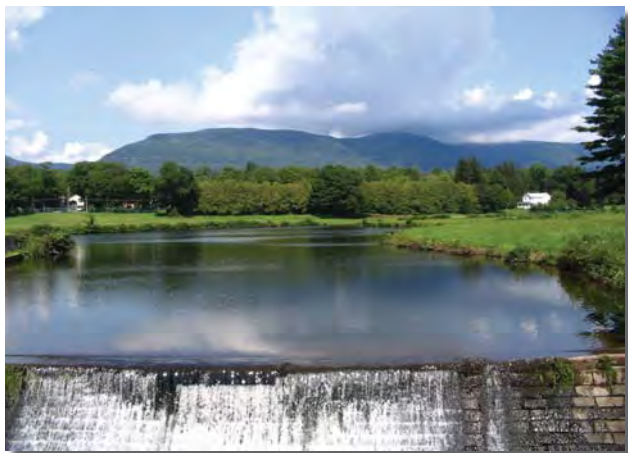
- Potential Access points to Esopus Creek
- Historic Points of Interest
- Hamlets
- Potential Saugerties Hudson River Trail
- Potential Esopus Creek Water Trail
- Important Waterways
- Core Farming Areas



Where the Esopus Creek Meets the Hudson River

Catskill Mountains

- Large, unbroken forests embedded with lakes, rivers, wetlands and vernal pools
- Headwater streams provide habitat for trout and cold water species
- Preservation of biodiversity and rare species, including the timber rattlesnake
- Maintaining drinking water quality



Blue Mountain Reservoir

Important Waterways, Watersheds and Aquifers

Sawyerkill, Plattekill, Esopus Creek, Beaver Kill, Kaaterskill

- Biodiversity benefits of riparian and upland habitat
- Water quality
- Flood protection and stormwater recharge
- Recreation and scenic qualities

Limestone and Shale Ridges

- Scenic views and character of Saugerties
- Unique geology
- Rare animals and plants



Glenerie Falls

Hudson River Corridor

- The historic "landscape that defined America"
- Riverine and estuary habitats
- Freshwater wetlands and freshwater intertidal mudflats
- Tidal area of the mouth of the Esopus
- Hudson River access and recreation opportunities

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In order to achieve the vision set forth in this plan, the following goals and strategies have been established. These goals and strategies were developed with input from the CAC and community members. Draft goals and strategies were reviewed at the April 2009 public meeting. The final goals and strategies that follow incorporate the community's input.

Goals identify what we want to achieve. Strategies define how we can achieve these goals.

A SUMMARY OF THE GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

- Goal 1:** Increase community awareness of the values and benefits of open space.
- Goal 2:** Increase access to open space and natural areas, where appropriate.
- Goal 3:** Preserve and maintain agricultural lands and support the economic viability of agriculture.
- Goal 4:** Ensure that assistance and guidance is available to landowners who wish to retain open space lands.
- Goal 5:** Ensure that the town's long-term vision for land use (the Comprehensive Plan) reflects a balance between open space conservation and economic development.
- Goal 6:** Establish a town conservation financing mechanism to preserve critical open space resources.
- Goal 7:** Ensure that future development projects preserve resources to the best of their ability.
- Goal 8:** Enable voluntary, private land conservation through the use of conservation easements.
- Goal 9:** Continue to develop a more accurate understanding of Saugerties' natural communities.
- Goal 10:** Minimize the impacts of climate change on the town's natural and agricultural resources.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THE VALUES AND BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE.

Open space resources - such as farms, forests, wetlands and rivers - provide many benefits to the community. Clean air and water, and food supply, are primary benefits that we often take for granted. Beyond these indispensable benefits, open space resources are important to our economy and quality of life. Chapter 1 discusses many of these benefits in more detail.

Acre for acre, open space such as forests and farms, typically does not require the same level of services (such as road maintenance and schools) as residential development. There have been many studies that have documented this important economic element of land use. This information should be promoted in Saugerties as part of the town's educational campaign about the importance of open space.

Strategies:

- a. Develop **outreach materials** to promote the cost savings and community benefits of open space.
- b. Engage the community in implementing the plan by conducting **educational forums** on various topics such as conservation financing, watershed protection, and forest management.

GOAL 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREAS, WHERE APPROPRIATE.

There are many existing, wonderful open space resources in Saugerties that are open to the public, including hiking trails through the Catskill Forest Preserve, Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Great Vly, and High Woods Multiple Use Area. There are also several large waterfront access parks and small boat launches along the Hudson River in Saugerties. Publicizing the availability of these open space resources is one simple thing that would help to encourage people to access existing open space.



Esopus Bend Nature Preserve

In addition to utilizing existing open space, there are also some opportunities to enhance access to open space. One of the main topics discussed in this planning process was enhancing the use of Bristol Beach, while also considering the sensitive ecological and historical resources on the site. Although Bristol Beach is currently open to the public, there is no formal plan for use and programming of the site.

Increasing access to the Hudson River waterfront in general was also mentioned extensively through the open space planning process.

There are many cases where allowing public access to open space is not appropriate. For example, conservation easements may be located on private lands, and the owners may not want to allow public access. Agriculture is another example of an open space use where public access is often not appropriate for a variety of reasons. There may also be sensitive ecological resources that should be closed off or managed to ensure that public access does not result in damage.

Strategies:

- a. Work in collaboration with NYS OPRHP and PIPC to develop a **master plan for Bristol Beach** that includes community input. As a first step, the town could set up a meeting with PIPC and OPRHP to discuss a possible joint use agreement so that the Town of Saugerties can have a voice in the planning process for Bristol Beach.
- b. Develop a **users' guide to the town's open spaces** and public access areas. This can be published on the web, or as a stand alone brochure. The guide could provide details on how to access parks and preserves, as well as information on parking, allowed uses, and points of interest.
- c. Develop a master plan for town trails, sidewalks, and bicycle amenities. A **trails and sidewalks master plan** would help to document desired future connections so that they can be incorporated as road improvements are made, as well as through major developments during the site planning process. Historic roads and trails should also be included.
- d. Work with the Towns of Hunter and Catskill to explore the concept of **creating a connection to the Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway** in Saugerties, along Platte Clove Road, Route 23A and Manorville Rd. to create a loop experience.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES



Biking along rural roads can be made safer by ensuring consistent shoulders and signage

GOAL 3: PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF AGRICULTURE.

Agriculture is an important land use in the Town of Saugerties. In addition to providing a source of local foods and other agricultural products, the town's farmlands provide larger benefits to the community's economy and quality of life. The Saugerties Farmers Market is one way that the Saugerties community helps to support local agriculture by providing a venue for local producers to sell direct to consumers. The Farmers Market is also a great incubator for new farmers, and for those who want to experiment and/or diversify their business. The town should continue to support, promote, and publicize the farmers market, in partnership with the village. Another way to maintain agriculture in Saugerties is to ensure that the town's local laws are supportive of agriculture and allow agricultural landowners to diversify. The town can also establish a local Purchase of Development Rights program, which would provide some funding for landowners who want to sell development rights.



Photo by Joy Moore

Saugerties Farmers Market

Strategies:

- a. **Adopt policies and procedures** that reiterate the importance of agriculture in the community. Even though many of these policies and procedures are already being implemented, it is important to formalize them, especially since the committees and boards that compose the town's leadership change over time.
 - **Avoid and minimize the loss of working farms and/or prime soils.** Working farms and prime soils should be delineated on site plans. The town planning board should work with applicants to avoid or minimize their conversion. For example, the conservation subdivision process should be used to preserve working farm areas and prime soils.
 - **Protect farms from the negative effects of adjacent development.** When a development is proposed, talk to agricultural property owners to determine their concerns regarding the development. Require new development to incorporate an adequate buffer from the adjacent farm, if appropriate.
 - **When making infrastructure improvements, consider how they will affect agriculture.** Infrastructure improvements can have both positive and negative affects on agriculture. For example, improved access to high-speed internet services can benefit farmers who want to promote their products online. In another example, a new road might fragment a working farm, making it difficult for a landowner to operate the land. Even a simple decision, such as the grading of a roadway, can make it difficult for agricultural landowners to move farm vehicles from fields to the road if the grade is too steep. These things should be considered and discussed with agricultural landowners to ensure their continued success.
- b. Ensure that town land use regulations **provide a supportive environment for agriculture.** The town's land use regulations should identify agriculture as a primary land use and promote development patterns that do not fragment and threaten the viability of agriculture. Regulations should also allow farmers to both produce and sell their products, as well as to diversify income. Suggested modifications to the town's zoning and land use regulations are discussed in Chapter 2. As a first step, the town could seek a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to **develop an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**, which would help to further explore these issues in conjunction with a working group of agricultural stakeholders. More information on the Department of Agriculture and Markets' grant programs is available at: <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/RFPS.html>.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- c. **Develop a Local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program.** Many of the agricultural landowners in Saugerties have been farming town lands for generations. As the town grows and changes, it can be difficult for landowners to continue farming. This is due to a number of factors, including rising land values and taxes, fragmentation of the agricultural land with roads and residential development, and complaints from neighbors regarding agricultural practices. It can also be difficult for landowners to pass the farm on to the next generation. Therefore, it is important to create options for landowners to allow them to continue farming - if they want to do so.

Purchase of development rights is one option for agricultural landowners who want to continue farming, obtain some equity out of their property, and ensure that the land always remains farmland.

Through the Purchase of Development Rights, a conservation easement can be sold by a landowner. PDR requires a funding source in order to pay the landowner for the development rights. The State Farmland Protection Program administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets offers one potential funding source for PDR. The program awards grants to local governments (town or county with approved agricultural protection plan) that cover up to 75% of the cost to acquire development rights on qualifying farms. It requires a 25% local match, which can come from a local fund, private donations, or the landowner (who can offer a bargain sale of the 25%). A bargain sale is the sale of the conservation easement at less than the market value. The difference can be claimed as a charitable donation for tax purposes.

The New York State Farmland Protection Program is a competitive grant program, with currently about \$23 million to spread across all of New York State. Therefore, the Town of Saugerties must pre-screen any potential grant applications to ensure that the most viable projects are submitted to the program. The town, working with an agricultural landowner, has already submitted an application for a PDR project that is under consideration pending the state budget.

Because funds in the state and county program are limited, many communities also establish their own local PDR program. This requires a dedicated source of funding and is discussed in more detail on pages 90-93.

GOAL 4: ENSURE THAT ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE TO LANDOWNERS WHO WISH TO RETAIN OPEN SPACE.

There are many existing programs and tools available for landowners who are interested in retaining their lands, including tax programs and benefits, as well as opportunities to sell development rights or donate conservation easements. Unfortunately, many landowners are not aware of these programs and tools and therefore are not aware of their options when it comes time to make a change with the property.



The Saxton Flats with views of the Catskills in the Background

The Town of Saugerties can help to provide information on these programs, as well as possibly establishing additional programs, to help landowners retain their open space lands.

Strategies:

- a. **Provide information on existing tax incentives** and tax reduction tools such as agricultural assessment and the forest land exemption (480a). This information can be compiled at town hall and offered to landowners upon request, and/or placed on the town's website.
- b. Explore the possibility to create a **local tax reduction incentive** such as a term easement program. This incentive would provide participating landowners with tax benefits if they agree to place a term easement (a term easement would limit development for a given number of years - typically 5 to 15 years) on their land which adheres to sustainable principles for use and management of the land. Term easements would be voluntary and the landowner could receive a tax benefit (through reduction of taxes).

Term easements could be offered for agricultural lands and forest lands that do not meet the requirements for state programs, as well as for including scenic and historic properties. Examples of local term easement programs in New York include the Town of Perinton, Monroe County and Town of Clifton Park, Saratoga County. Term easements can be coupled with a right of first refusal for the town, should the property go up for sale.

It is important to understand the tax implications of such a program before it is advanced.

- c. **Promote existing forums** and workshop opportunities for landowners, such as those offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension, the American Farmland Trust, and the Ulster County Land Trusts' annual landowner forum.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 5: ENSURE THAT THE TOWN'S LONG-TERM VISION FOR LAND USE (THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN) REFLECTS A BALANCE BETWEEN OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Since the last joint comprehensive plan was completed (1999), many things have changed in the Town and Village of Saugerties. In every community, updating the comprehensive plan is something that should be done periodically. It is an opportunity to look into the future and ensure that the town's policies and strategies are on track with the community's goals and needs. Chapter 2 discusses the need for comprehensive plan updates related to agriculture. Yet, there are many reasons for updating the comprehensive plan - including the need for the town to formally establish desired growth areas to help balance the open space conservation regulations that have already been established (such as the conservation subdivision regulations and overlay zoning districts).

Strategies:

- a. Consider conducting a **build-out analysis and developing a fiscal model** to help identify an appropriate balance between growth and open space preservation. It is helpful to understand how the town's existing zoning regulations could be fully implemented over time. If every home and building that is allowed under the town's existing zoning were built, what would the town look like? And, more importantly, how would this "build-out" affect the town's economy, environmental health and quality of life? This is the focus of a build-out and fiscal analysis. This information helps to provide a snapshot of the town in the future - and allows the community to respond to this snapshot. A dynamic build-out/fiscal analysis could also provide the option to explore alternative land use scenarios and their fiscal implications, to ultimately develop a preferred vision for the town.
- b. Consider **updating the comprehensive plan** with respect to land use, infrastructure, community character, and natural resources (and other elements as deemed appropriate). The information in this plan can be used as the natural resources/open space element of the comprehensive plan update.
- c. Periodically **review zoning and subdivision regulations** to ensure that they are farm-friendly and forest-friendly. Consider supporting and facilitating uses that generate income and support preservation of open space such as outdoor recreation, agri-tourism, alternative energy development, and eco-friendly resorts. Involve land owners and business owners in this discussion.

d. Additional strategies for the town to consider include:

- Conduct priority/ focused growth areas study.
- Amend the local land use codes to require environmental review (at the discretion of the Planning Board, Town Board or recommendation by the town Conservation Advisory Commission) of a site prior to the submittal of site plans, special permits and subdivisions.
- Where appropriate and feasible, map the boundaries of the priority conservation recommendations contained in each natural resource area in the plan.
- Amend the local land use codes to require submittal of information on how a project conforms to the recommendations in each natural resource section in the plan.
- Amend the purpose section of local land use codes to include reference to the open space plan.

CASE STUDY: NEW PALTZ BUILD-OUT AND FISCAL ANALYSIS

Much like Saugerties, New Paltz consists of a dense village center surrounded by rural countryside and spectacular mountain views. Also like Saugerties, the New York State Thruway runs through New Paltz and provides easy access to the community opening it up for potential growth. After completing an open space plan, the Town of New Paltz decided to conduct a build-out and fiscal analysis to identify how the town's existing land use regulations could impact the open space plan's goals, and the fiscal well-being of the community.

The full build-out potential predicted under existing zoning for New Paltz was estimated to be approximately 3,000 new single-family homes and 4.6 million square feet of new commercial growth. **Furthermore, the study concluded that if New Paltz is able to conserve the 3,000 acre goal of the open space plan (in 30 years), the average home owner would save approximately \$70 per year (in 2006 dollars) over the full build-out scenario. Alternatively, if full build-out were to occur as estimated in the model, the combined town and school tax rate would increase by approximately 10% in 2006 dollars, which for the average homeowner would be an increase of approximately \$550 on top of inflationary increases.**

With this information and a strong public campaign organized by the New Paltz Open Space Committee, town residents overwhelmingly approved a \$2 million bond in the fall of 2006 to preserve open space. The town is currently in the process of implementing the bond and updating the comprehensive plan to ensure that the land use patterns support the desired open space plan vision.



When the build-out analysis was overlaid on the open space vision map, it was clear that many of the resources that were most important to the New Paltz community were at risk. Of particular concern was the potential for 600 new homes in the Buttermille-Canaan Foothills - the hillsides along the edge of the Shawangunk Ridge that are important to the character and viewshed of the town (colored yellow on the map). Each pink dot represents a potential new home.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 6: ESTABLISH A TOWN CONSERVATION FINANCING MECHANISM TO PRESERVE CRITICAL OPEN SPACE RESOURCES.

Financing open space conservation in Saugerties will require a partnership approach. The more partnerships the town is able to build, the more the town's funds will be leveraged. This will not only help the town to advance conservation goals quickly, but it will ultimately help to reduce costs to town taxpayers.

The primary partners in land conservation projects are the landowners – without them there would be no project. Partners in conservation financing include all levels of government, including Ulster County, New York State and the federal government. Partners also include land trusts and conservation organizations, which can help to develop and implement conservation projects, and often hold and steward easements. Lastly, developers can be key partners in conservation projects, both by helping to preserve land through the development process and also by preserving resources through conservation design.

There are many sources of funding available for implementing the town's open space plan. For example, the town may apply to federal grant programs such as the USDA Farmland Ranchland Protection Program or the New York State Farmland Protection Program for farmland projects. Other grant programs established in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and the state Environmental Protection Fund provide funds for parklands and other conservation actions. The state Recreational Trails Program provides funding for trail development. The Hudson River Estuary Grant Program also provides funding for open space planning and other innovative activities such as intermunicipal resource planning.

Land trusts and other conservation organizations such as the Esopus Creek Conservancy, Open Space Institute, Scenic Hudson, and the Woodstock Land Conservancy, are also primary partners in conservation. They provide invaluable assistance in working with landowners, providing community outreach, developing grant applications, holding and monitoring easements, and long-term stewardship of the land. In order to build successful long-term projects, conservation organizations should be considered part of the team from the project start.

Landowners and developers are also important partners in conservation financing. Landowners can donate property or provide a bargain sale towards a conservation easement, which is factored into the financing equation. Developers can also help to achieve the open space vision by conserving quality open space, or by constructing desired trail connections on future projects.

CONSERVATION FINANCING OPTIONS

OPEN SPACE LOCAL APPROPRIATIONS

Local government can appropriate funds (through local budget authority) collected through property taxes to purchase lands or development rights, etc. This type of budget allocation can be a one-time annual appropriation or a multi-year appropriation. Local appropriations are limited to available funds and are weighed against other public costs, often producing limited results for open space conservation.

MUNICIPAL BONDS

A local government can issue a bond to finance special projects, such as open space preservation. A municipal bond allows a municipality to raise capital applicable for investment in capital projects and repay the debt (bond principal and interest) over time. Bonds can be retired in 20 years or 30 years, for example. A municipal bond can be placed on a ballot during a local election for voter approval, or it can be subject to permissive referendum. Under permissive referendum, the municipal board may take an action without a vote, however, voters have an opportunity to petition the decision and require a ballot measure. Successful municipal bonding requires extensive public outreach and education, but provides the opportunity to obtain dedicated funds for an open space program.

REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX

A real estate transfer tax is a one-time fee paid by the buyer of real estate property. It is collected when real estate sells and has typically been set at 1-2% of the amount of the sale that is over the median value of homes in the area. The real estate transfer fee provides an ongoing source for land conservation projects – money that essentially will be paid to willing landowners for land for conservation. This is an interesting option to finance conservation for many communities because it does not raise taxes.

In order for a community to take advantage of the real estate transfer fee, New York State lawmakers would first need to pass enabling legislation, giving permission to the community to place the establishment of a real estate transfer fee on the local ballot for a voter referendum.

The Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act, passed by New York State in 2007, gives municipalities in Westchester and Putnam counties the power to create funds to protect natural and historic heritage when and if local voters choose to do so. An opt-in measure, municipalities must put the creation of these funds to a local referendum. If passed, resources for the local preservation fund would be generated by a real estate transfer fee of up to two percent on the sale of homes above the median for that area, as determined by the state.

RECREATION/SPECIAL FEES

The town already collects a recreation fee (in lieu of parkland) which is used to meet recreational needs in the community. In the future, the amount collected should be evaluated to confirm adequacy toward meeting the recreational needs of the town as it grows.

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This partnership of public and private investment can go a long way towards implementing the goals of the town's open space plan. However, in order for grant projects to be truly competitive, they should be significantly leveraged with local dollars. State, federal, and county programs are not meant to be a sole source of funding for local projects, and they simply do not have enough money available to fund every project that comes through the door. In fact, for every dollar awarded under the state farmland protection program, four dollars go unfunded. In fiscal years 04-05 and 05-06, the New York State Farmland Protection Program received approximately \$130 million in requests for \$26 million in funds. A similar situation exists for federal funding sources.

CONSERVATION FINANCING OPTIONS (CONTINUED)

DEVELOPMENT MITIGATION FEES

Mitigation costs can be developed through a comprehensive Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) process under a town-wide build-out. This process would help to identify impacts of the full build-out of the town and create measures to mitigate such impacts. Several communities are using the tools developed through such a process to obtain funds for land conservation through the private (development) sector. This works by requiring developers to pay a mitigation fee for development impacts to open space. For example, the Town of Clifton Park (Saratoga County, NY) recently adopted open space incentive zoning, which provides a density bonus incentive to landowners in exchange for open space amenities. For single-family residential increases under the incentive zoning, each bonus dwelling unit requires the preservation of three acres of open space or payment of \$30,000.

OPEN SPACE INCENTIVE ZONING

Incentive zoning (or amenity zoning) allows a landowner or developer to work with a municipality to obtain specific incentives in exchange for providing desired community amenities such as open space conservation. Incentives may include modifications to density, allowed uses, setbacks, or other zoning controls. The landowner or developer may provide, in exchange, dedicated open space, trail access, park land, or potentially cash (in lieu of land) to contribute to a PDR program.

PRIVATE FUND RAISING

Many communities have successfully raised funds to support conservation efforts through private fund raising events such as dinners, concerts, and festivals. Partnerships with local land trusts and other organizations can be a successful way to raise funds through private sources.

Local governments are increasingly investing in open space conservation, and they are doing this through a variety of ways. Some communities are setting up capital reserve funds or setting aside recreation fees to implement open space projects. Other communities have developed creative solutions to financing open space.

In addition, a significant number of communities in the Hudson Valley have brought conservation financing ballot initiatives to voters, asking them to approve funds for open space conservation. According to the Trust for Public Land's Landvote database, which keeps track of conservation finance ballot initiatives across the country, New York State voters approved \$781 million in conservation measures in November 2006, with a 100% approval rating. Most of the conservation measures approved in November 2006 were in the Hudson Valley. The text box on page 94 provides more information on open space ballot initiatives in New York.

This plan recommends the establishment of a significant local funding source for resource conservation, so that the town can implement the open space plan. Ideally, the financing program will include a diversity of options, including several of the options discussed in the text box on pages 91 and 92.

Possible Strategy:

- a. Consider a **local appropriation, general obligation bond or a real estate transfer fee** to help finance open space conservation. See the text box on page 91. In order to advance a general obligation bond some next steps that should be considered include:
 - Continue to **provide outreach and education** about the open space plan and the benefits of open space to the community.
 - **Develop the build-out and fiscal analysis** (goal 4, strategy B) to help identify the costs and benefits of growth and conservation in Saugerties. This information should be used to help publicize the economic benefits of open space preservation.
 - **Conduct a survey** of the community to determine if they would be willing to accept a tax increase to pay for open space conservation (and if so, how much). The Trust for Public Lands has conducted similar surveys in other communities in the Hudson Valley and would be a good resource to assist with this effort.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

MANY NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITIES HAVE ESTABLISHED CONSERVATION FUNDS

IN THE HUDSON VALLEY REGION:

In November 2006, New Paltz town and village voters overwhelmingly approved a \$2 million bond to implement the open space plan. The Towns of Gardiner and Marbletown also approved open space bonds in the amounts of \$1.5 million and \$1 million respectively in 2006.

In November 2005, voters in the Town of Beekman, Dutchess County, NY supported a \$3 million open space bond by a 2.5 to 1 margin.

In 2003, voters in the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County, NY approved a \$3.5 million open space bond by an approximately 80 percent margin to purchase the development rights from interested farmers. The Town's investment is being leveraged with dollars from a Dutchess County matching grant program, technical assistance from Dutchess Land Conservancy, and follows significant investment by Scenic Hudson, a regional conservation organization. The Town adopted an open space plan in 2000.

In 2000, voters in the Town of Warwick, Orange County, NY approved a \$9 million bond for open space and farmland protection. The local goal is to protect approximately 3,000 acres of the Town's farmland and open space. A study for the Town of Warwick estimated that the continued development otherwise would cost taxpayers an estimated \$4 to \$5 million per year in additional school taxes.

IN NEW YORK STATE:

In 2004, voters in the Town of Webster, Monroe County, NY approved a \$5.9 million bond program, and subsequently have secured matching grants from the federal government, New York State, and Monroe County to leverage their local dollars to meet their program budget of close to \$7.9 million. The 2002 fiscal model prepared for the town and school district showed that for every dollar invested in open space conservation, town residents would save an equal dollar in avoided costs associated with growth. Hence, in that community, there was no net cost of investing in open space land acquisitions.

In 1998, the Town of Pittsford, Monroe County, NY approved a \$9.9 million bond for open space and farmland protection. When the town reviewed the fiscal impact of the \$9.9 million dollar open space bond, it was determined that the approximate \$64 per year cost to the average household to pay for the bond would be far less than doing nothing about open space bonding, as the cost of community services to serve that additional development would impact the average householder about \$250 per year in new taxes for schools, road maintenance, and other community services.

GOAL 7: ENSURE THAT FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS PRESERVE RESOURCES TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITY.

The goal of preserving open space need not always be in conflict with development. In fact, there is much that can be done to maintain open space systems through the development process. This plan provides an inventory of resources and documents how to preserve the connectivity of resources. This information should be used not only to identify lands for conservation, but also to help guide decisions in the development process.

Strategies:

- a. Establish **CAC representation on the planning board** to help with project reviews.
- b. Develop a process to **refer to the open space plan maps** and narrative in Chapter 2 in the development review process.
- c. Develop an **early applicant meeting process** to review the important aspects of a project related to open space.

GOAL 8: ENABLE VOLUNTARY, PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION THROUGH THE USE OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS.

Supporting voluntary land conservation through conservation easements is a cost-effective way for the town to preserve land. There are already several land trusts working in the Town of Saugerties. The town can support their efforts and might even consider inviting the land trusts to a town board or planning board meeting to make introductions and discuss ways in which they can work together.

One issue that has been raised in this planning process is that there may be a land trust “gap” in Saugerties. Each land trust has a specific mission that focuses on a geographic area or resource. For example, Scenic Hudson focuses on the Hudson River and the Esopus Creek Conservancy focuses on the Esopus Creek Watershed. With this in mind, there may be certain areas of the town where a landowner may be interested in conservation yet an appropriate land trust may not be available. Some of the land trusts in Saugerties may be willing to step out of their immediate focus area to assist in this effort.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Strategies:

- a. Conduct a **meeting with the land trusts** working in Saugerties to understand their priorities and activities in the town and discuss areas where there may be gaps (or overlap) in coverage. At the same meeting, the participants might want to discuss the process for conservation subdivision projects and clarify with the land trusts if (and how) they might be willing to be involved in such projects. In most cases, it is important for a land trust to be involved in a conservation development project early to ensure that the project parameters can also be scoped to meet the land trust's mission and goals. The town's CAC, Planning Board, and Town Board members should all be invited to participate in this meeting.

- b. **Provide information to landowners** regarding conservation easement tax credits, estate planning, and other tax benefits of donating a conservation easement. The Land Trust Alliance (www.landtrustalliance.org) is a good source for such information. The following link provides a good summary of how a landowner can work with a land trust:
<http://www.landtrustalliance.org/conserve/documents/landowners.pdf>.

LAND TRUSTS IN SAUGERTIES

Land trusts are private not-for-profit organizations dedicated to the mission of preserving land. Many land trusts preserve land through the use of a conservation easement. This is a voluntary, flexible tool that restricts development of a property. Conservation easements can be donated by landowners for significant tax benefits. In communities with a purchase of development rights program, they can also be sold. Conservation easements are a good way to preserve land while keeping property on the tax rolls.

Each land trust in Saugerties has a specific mission and geographic area of interest. If a landowner is interested in conservation, the best way to obtain more information is to explore the websites and contact a relevant land trust working in Saugerties:

Scenic Hudson Land Trust

Website: <http://www.scenichudson.org>

Phone: (845)473-4440

Open Space Institute

Website: <http://www.osiny.org>

Phone: (212)290-8200

Esopus Creek Conservancy

Website: <http://www.esopuscreekconservancy.org>

Phone: (845)247-0664

Woodstock Land Conservancy

Website: <http://www.woodstocklandconservancy.org>

Phone: (845)334-2418

GOAL 9: CONTINUE TO DEVELOP A MORE ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF SAUGERTIES' NATURAL COMMUNITIES.

The inventory mapping and narrative in this plan are based on the best available data and current understanding of the town's natural communities. Over time, more detailed information will become available as habitats are mapped. This detailed information should continue to be developed and integrated into one natural community database for Saugerties.

Strategies:

- a. Continue to prioritize areas of the town for study, and conduct **biodiversity assessment** using Hudsonia methods.
- b. When data are available, develop a **town-wide natural community map** and identify priorities for conservation.



The Hudson River

GOAL 10: MINIMIZE THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE TOWN'S NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.

As discussed in Chapter 2, climate change is one of the major threats to the town's natural and agricultural resources. Climate change is expected to impact the business of agriculture, as well as the health of our natural communities and economies. Refer to Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the future concerns associated with climate change. Planning ahead to minimize the impacts of climate change on the open space resources in Saugerties is important.

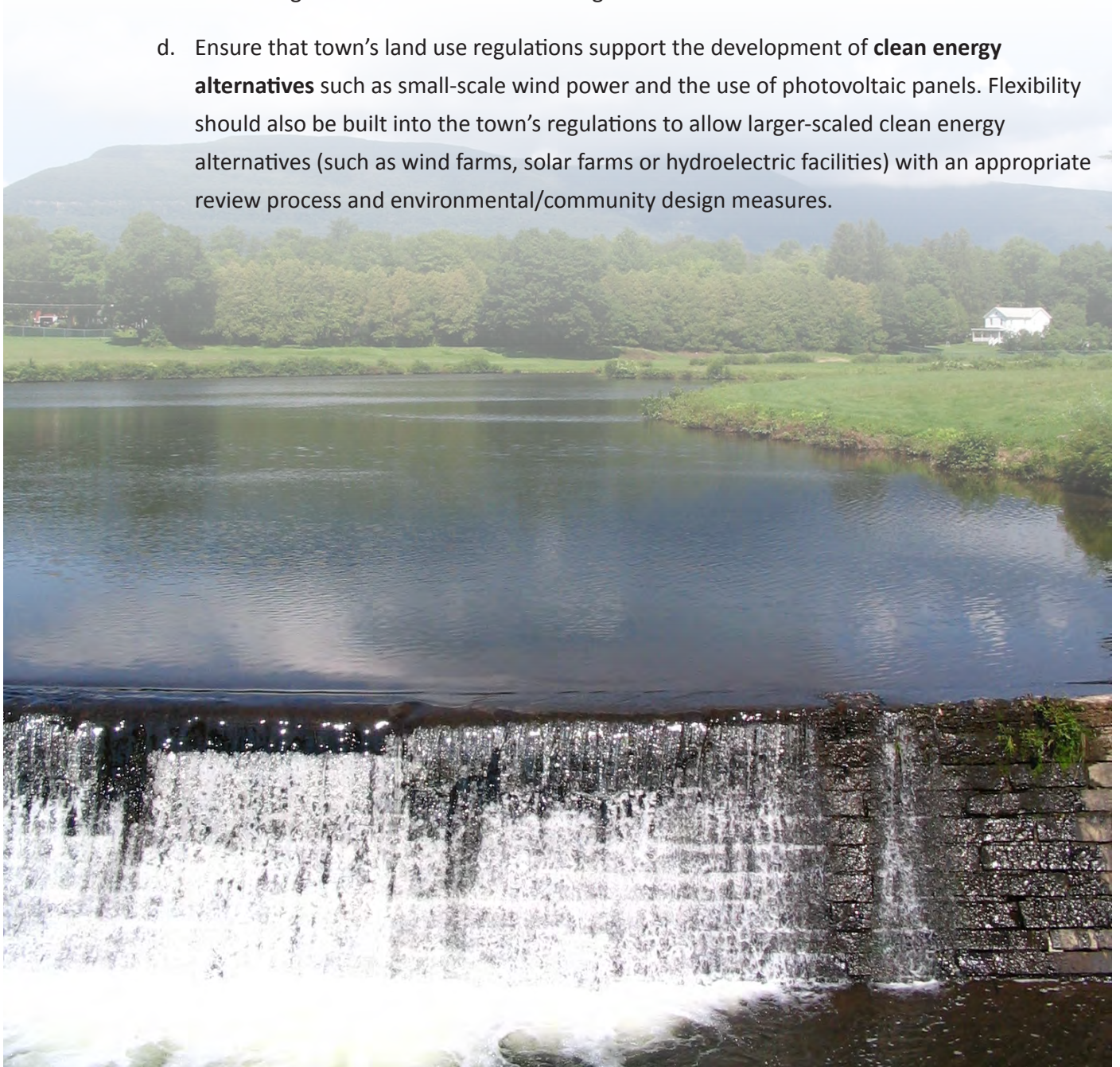
Strategies:

- a. Develop a **town climate change committee** to study and develop solutions to protect/mitigate natural resources from climate change. This committee should interface with existing organizations and committees that are involved in planning for climate change.
- b. Participate in the **Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM)**. There are several regional PRISMs set up across New York State to coordinate

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invasive species management. These partnerships are conducting research, monitoring, education, and eradication efforts on a regional scale. Citizens and town committees can participate in these efforts.

- c. Ensure that town land use regulations and standards do not support excessive use of **impervious surfaces**. Road standards, parking standards, and coverage requirements all address impervious surfaces. There may also be opportunities to retrofit paved areas along streams and shorelines to make them more pervious. This will help to address the impacts of flooding associated with climate change.
- d. Ensure that town's land use regulations support the development of **clean energy alternatives** such as small-scale wind power and the use of photovoltaic panels. Flexibility should also be built into the town's regulations to allow larger-scaled clean energy alternatives (such as wind farms, solar farms or hydroelectric facilities) with an appropriate review process and environmental/community design measures.



Blue Mountain Reservoir

IMPLEMENTING THE OPEN SPACE PLAN

This open space plan for Saugerties is a significant investment in the understanding of the open space resources, needs and opportunities in Saugerties. It is important to continue community dialogue about the preservation of open space into the future - not only to help build public support for open space preservation but also to ensure that the plan remains dynamic and responds to changing needs and opportunities.

At the end of the day, this plan will be judged on the tangible contributions it makes to the quality of life in Saugerties. Therefore, it is important that there is a clear path to implementation. The chart on the following page summarizes the goals and strategies for the open space plan and identifies the boards and committees responsible for implementation of each strategy. The section that follows provides a short-term plan of action for the Saugerties CAC to initiate plan implementation.



Photo by George Heidcamp

Lower Esopus Creek

IMPLEMENTING THE OPEN SPACE PLAN

Goal	Strategies	Timeframe	Responsibility	
1	Increase community awareness of the benefits of open space.	A. Develop outreach materials to promote open space benefits	Short-term	CAC
		B. Conduct educational forums	Short-term	CAC
2	Increase access to open space and natural areas, where appropriate.	A. Master plan for Bristol Beach	Medium-term	RAB/TB
		B. Open space users guide	Medium-term	CAC
		C. Trails master plan	Medium-term	CAC/TB
		D. Saugerties connection to Hunter Scenic Byway	Long-term	CAC/TB
3	Preserve and maintain agricultural lands and support the economic viability of agriculture.	A. Adopt policies and procedures to support agriculture	Medium-term	TB
		B. Local farmland protection plan	Medium-term	CAC/new committee
		C. Local Purchase of Development Rights Program	Medium-term	CAC/TB
4	Ensure that assistance and guidance is available to landowners who wish to retain open space lands.	A. Promote information on existing tax benefits	Short-term	CAC
		B. Explore a local tax reduction tool/term easement program	Medium-term	CAC/TB
		C. Promote existing forums and informational opportunities	Short-term	CAC
5	Ensure that the town's long-term vision for land use reflects a balance between open space conservation and economic development.	A. Build-out and fiscal analysis	Short-term	CPC/TB
		B. Comprehensive Plan update	Short-term	CPC/TB
		C. Farm and Forest-friendly zoning changes	Short-term	CPC/TB
6	Establish a town conservation financing mechanism.	A. Explore a general obligation bond	Medium-term	CAC/TB
7	Ensure that future development projects preserve resources to the best of their ability.	A. Establish CAC representation on Planning Board	Short-term	CAC/TB
		B. Process for referring to open space plan during development review	Short-term	PB
		C. Early applicant review process	Short-term	PB
8	Enable voluntary, private land conservation through the use of conservation easements.	A. Meeting with land trusts	Short-term	CAC with TB/ PB
		B. Conservation easement information to landowners	Short-term	CAC with land trusts
9	Continue to develop a better understanding of the town's important natural communities.	A. Biodiversity assessment	Medium-term	CAC/BAT
		B. Town-wide natural community map	Long-term	CAC/BAT
10	Minimize the impacts of climate change on the town's natural and agricultural resources.	A. Establish town climate change committee	Short-term	TB
		B. Review/update town codes with respect to impervious surface	Medium-term	CPC/TB/CCC
		C. Zoning updates to support clean energy	Medium-term	CPC/GETF/ TB/CCC

BAT = Biodiversity Assessment Team CPC= Comprehensive Planning Committee CAC= Conservation Advisory Commission
 CCC= Climate Change Committee (future) TB= Town Board GETF= Green Energy Task Force PB= Planning Board
 RAB= Recreation Advisory Board

SHORT-TERM ACTION PLAN

There are a number of recommended strategies in this plan, and an even greater number of smaller steps associated with each strategy. Each of these strategies will require commitment, leadership, and some level of public investment. The following section highlights short-term steps recommended to help organize and build momentum for implementation of the open space plan.

NEXT STEPS:

1. The Town Board should recommend a CAC member to serve as a liaison to the Planning Board. In order to encourage the utilization of the open space plan information during development review, one member of the town's CAC should become an active member of the Planning Board. This will also ensure regular communication between the CAC and the Planning Board.
2. The CAC should arrange a working session with all of the town's boards, committees, and commissions to review the open space plan and establish next steps for each of the short-term strategies. Each board and/or committee should review the suggested strategies and discuss the best way to advance them given their existing work load and priorities. Opportunities for collaboration among boards and/or with other communities who are working on similar efforts should be considered. The Towns of New Paltz, Marbletown, and Shawangunk have all developed local open space bonds and should be considered a resource for that effort. The Ulster County land trusts should be considered a resource when developing outreach materials related to land conservation. The planners at Ulster County are aware of the ongoing planning efforts in the county and could provide helpful guidance with coordination efforts.
3. The CAC should arrange a working session with the Planning Board, the town planner, and possibly the open space plan consultants, to establish a process for early review of projects using the open space plan data. Using an existing project as a model might be a helpful way to evaluate and improve the process.
4. The CAC should form a sub-committee in charge of developing outreach materials to promote the benefits of open space preservation. There are many sources of information that already exist for this purpose. The CAC should review this information and determine their target audience, message, and venue for publicity. This might result in a brochure, a series of forums, a regular newsletter update on the open space plan, or any number of other possible mediums. The CAC can partner with the Esopus Creek Conservancy and other nonprofit and community organizations on similar outreach goals.
5. The CAC, working with the town planner, should set up a resource library consisting of existing published materials relevant to implementation of the Open Space Plan. This information base should be updated with an annual review, and should include a list of additions, and a revised index with new materials added. The index should be posted on the town's website.
6. The CAC should work with the Comprehensive Planning Committee and Town Board to determine a scope of work and possible funding source(s) to implement a build-out and fiscal analysis. This information

SHORT-TERM ACTION PLAN

should be used as a starting point for a comprehensive plan update which should be conducted in the near future. The Hudson River Estuary Program grants may help to fund part or all of this initiative. A joint town-village effort is recommended.

7. The Town Board should formalize an agricultural committee (there is already a working group) that is made up of farmers, agricultural landowners, and others involved in agriculture and agri-business. Working with this group, the town should seek funding from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop a local Farmland Protection Plan. There is currently funding available for this purpose and applications are accepted on a rolling basis.
8. The CAC should meet with the Biodiversity Assessment Team (BAT) to prioritize areas of the town for biodiversity assessment and determine potential sources of funding to support these efforts.
9. The Town Board should consider the creation of a Climate Change Committee in the Town of Saugerties. The purpose of this committee would be to research and provide advice on town policy and initiatives related to climate change, as well as to coordinate with regional efforts.
10. The CAC (working with the Town Board) should set up a meeting with the Towns of Hunter and Catskill to discuss the possibility of creating a connection to the Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway through Saugerties and Catskill.



CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This plan provides an inventory of the open space resources that are important to the Saugerties community, including natural areas, waterways, recreation, agriculture, and historic resources. Although each of these resources is important, the priorities that have emerged are depicted in the open space vision map. The vision is one that preserves whole landscapes and systems in Saugerties.

Looking ahead to the future, the open space plan sets forth goals and strategies that would help to maintain agriculture as an important resource, and a viable business opportunity in Saugerties. It would preserve the integrity of forests and waterways in Saugerties, as well as the benefits they provide in purifying our air and drinking water. It would also preserve the smaller elements of the landscape that are uniquely Saugerties - the limestone ridges, pastures, wetlands, historic landscapes, meadows, and Hudson River views. These elements are part of the town's rural character, as well as its natural and cultural history. Implementing this plan would help to maintain these resources that are appreciated by Saugerties residents, old and new, so that they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

Implementing the open space plan can also lead to substantial fiscal benefits for the Town of Saugerties. Conservation of the town's farmlands, forests, riparian areas, and other natural areas can help to maintain the town's fiscal balance. If these lands were instead developed with homes, it might cost the town taxpayers more to provide the homes with roads, schools, and other services.



Blue Mountain Reservoir

TOWN OF SAUGERTIES OPEN SPACE PLAN

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APPENDIX A
**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND
FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**

Town of Saugerties Open Space Plan

Public Meeting: September 22, 2008

Working Group Discussion Notes

After a short presentation discussing the purpose and background of the open space plan, meeting participants formed three smaller working groups of 10-20 people. These three groups discussed the questions and topics outlined on the following pages. The responses were recorded on large notepads and transcribed to this file exactly as they were recorded.

Note: After the notes were taken, they were tacked up on the wall and participants placed “dot” stickers on their priorities for Steps 2 and 3. The red stars (****) represent those topics that were important to the residents who participated in this particular meeting. The more red stars, the more important the topic/issue.

Working Group Summary:

Step 1: **Identify principles for conducting the open space planning process.**

Melissa’s Group

- Stop
- People are our resources
- More voices
- Consider the information in the comprehensive plan
- Principles mesh with the county open space plan
- Process help understand creative solutions
- Make sure people can stay
- Education
- Address “Not with my land”
- Food security/H2O security protection
- Quality of life

John’s Group

- Incentives
 - For taxpayers (economic)
- Public education on the importance of open space conservation
 - Voluntary
- Public involvement throughout the process (buy-in)
- Process (committee)
 - Identify/seek to preserve what is most important
- Conserve resource base balanced with economic development ***
 - Two sides same coin

Mike's Group

- Buy-in from community
- Comprehensive approach
 - Don't forget resources
- Analyze what is here
 - Resources
 - Drainage
 - Population
 - Absentee owners – ownership
- What is our goal?
 - In order to measure to success
 - Small increments
- Balance. Do we need to have a balance of open space or priorities?
- Understand current uses of the land
- Aspirations of landowners
 - Participation of landowners
 - Benefits for landowners
- Public, private, and non-profit resources needed to achieve goals
- Implementation
- Support of local government
- Certain resources are critical, sensitive
- Continuity of open space- connections

Step 2: Identify major concerns and barriers to open space preservation or conservation in Saugerties

Melissa's Group

- Inertia
- Fear
- 401k
- Control of land
- Taxes ****
- Pass down to next generation
- People think highest and best use is development
- Ability to think out of the box to address food security *
- Pollution/Brownfields – areas that could be open/enjoyed *
- Funding ***
- Education “taking” *
- Transportation/Traffic congestion *
- Growth is costly ***
- Second homes crowding

John's Group

- Funding/Finance ***
- Enforcement **
- Public understanding *****
- No easy way ***
 - Mechanism- how to do
 - Easement
 - Tax break
- Lack of local control *****
 - "outside developers" create large projects that are costly to maintain *
 - Local government may not be cooperative with open space plan *
 - Not necessarily a local priority
- Lack of proper land stewardship **
- Adherence to state environmental quality review ***
- Zoning may be/is a barrier (cost of land)

Mike's Group

- Money
 - Competing interests
 - Competition with the markets
- Ownership rights are important *****
- Ownership responsibility (stewardship) ****
- Different ideas about use/value of open space ***
 - "internal conflict"
- Understanding of fiscal conditions **
- Development equals jobs which equals a tax base *****
- Perceptions versus reality *

Step 3: **Identify open space needs/opportunities**

Melissa's Group

- Education
- Horse/bike trails *****
- River/Mountains ****
- Farms **
- Aquifer preservation
- Overlook escarpment → connects caskills/boundary with Woodstock (sensitive) *
- More access to Hudson *****
 - Walk/Bike
 - Ulster Landing Park Eve's Pt.
 - Swim in Hudson
- Cultural/Educational spaces *
- Change zoning to protect vistas and other things

- Jobs ***
- Energy costs
 - Wind
 - Solar
- History of preservation/local success stories *
- Conservation easement *

John's Group

- Access to the river
- Safe paths *
 - Walk
 - Bike
 - Horse, etc.
- Reclaiming historic roads...totrails ***
 - E.g. Vermont "ancient roads"
- Wetlands *****
 - Town role?
 - Stream corridors
 - Opportunity for land owners
- All kinds of conservation options ***
 - Different type of land protection by landowners
- NYS DEC Fishing easements **
 - "Fee simple" to conservation trust
 - Development rights
 - Trail
- Incentives *****
 - Economic
 - Taxpayers
 - Township
- Preservation of scenic vistas *****
 - View point
 - View shed
 - View corridors
- Viable agriculture ****
- No/regulated mining of prime soil *
- Better ideas for organic grown veg. **
- Treatment

Mike's Group

- Esopus Creek *****
 - Shoreline
 - Water quality
 - Still opportunities to protect
- Farms *****
 - Protect and grow agricultural base

- Winston Farm and others
- Wetland protection (local) *****
 - Aquifer recharge
- Share use and awareness of protected resources
- Help landowners keep land open *****
 - Incentives
 - Make the economics work
 - Try to help those that need the help
- Public access to waterfront ****
 - Esopus
 - Hudson
 - Platekill, etc.
- Forestland ***
 - Access to forest (old lumbertrails)
 - Public walking, riding paths *****
- Connections in region *
- Tourism *****
 - Economic development
 - Open space *
- Carbon credits for protection of land

Step 4: **Create a Vision Statement for open space**

Melissa's Group

- Stable population
- Not less than 60 percent forest
- Cluster development with lots preserved for open space in between
 - Around current centers
- Clean water/swimming and drinking
- Retain historical character
 - Buildings
 - Streets
- Keep it the way it is
- Green jobs
- Jobs of all kinds *
- Taxed
- Living wage

John's Group

- More proactive
- Represent the communities values
- Sense of place
- Historic
- Sustainable

- Vibrant
- Not richness
- Balance investment with land
- Biodiversity integration

Mike's Group

- Rural tradition and character
- Natural
- Preserve
- Comprehensive
- Natural and historic resources (stone walls)
- Accessible
- Agricultural
- Beautiful
- Peaceful
- Quality of life
- Consensus
- Clean air and water
- Economics of farming
- Eat and heat locally
- Major landscape elements
- Limestone ridges
- Blue stone
- Pastures/meadows
- Mountain views

Step 5: **Prioritize** (dot sticker exercise)

Town of Saugerties Open Space Plan Landowner Focus Group Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: February 19, 2009; 5:00 to 7:00 PM at Saugerties Town Hall

Meeting Notes

The meeting began with a presentation by Melissa Barry of Behan Planning Associates (consultants to the town's open space plan). After the presentation, Ms. Barry initiated a dialogue with landowners about their concerns and ideas regarding the open space plan. Eleven landowners participated in the focus group.

I. Presentation about the open space plan

Melissa Barry of Behan Planning and Design provided a short introduction to the open space plan. She explained that the people invited to the focus group were selected from a list of approximately 100 large-acreage landowners in the town. They were not targeted for any particular reason other than that the town is interested in hearing the perspective and ideas of landowners. The intent of the meeting is to collect feedback that will help to inform the open space plan.

Ms. Barry discussed the planning process and goals of the plan. The plan is currently in the public outreach and information gathering phase. Meetings with various interest groups and stakeholders will be conducted to gather input before the plan is developed. The purpose of the plan is to identify open space resources that are important and develop strategies for preserving open space. Ms. Barry also discussed some of the more common tools that are used by communities in New York to preserve open space.

II. Dialogue with landowner participants

Ms. Barry asked the participants a series of questions. The dialogue is recorded below.

Question 1: Are there any concerns about the open space plan or the planning process that you would like to bring forward?

- One participant asked there is a draft plan available for review. Ms. Barry explained that the plan will be developed after the input has been gathered from various stakeholder groups and interests. This information gathering stage is currently going on in parallel with the inventory phase which consists of mapping and review and analysis of existing data.
- There should be a balance between open space and economic development in the town.

Town of Saugerties Open Space Plan Landowner Focus Group Meeting Notes

- Landowners want to keep their rights. They do not want to have rights taken away through changes in zoning. Zoning changes have direct impacts on landowners' rights and the value of a property.
- Town zoning and development regulations make it hard to develop a property and create a good development project.
- Concerned that we will be "taxed out of existence."

Question 2: What challenges are large-acreage landowners currently facing in Saugerties?

- It is hard to maintain and steward large properties. Finding help can also be a challenge. One landowner discussed the responsibility of being a steward of two significant streams that run through the land, as well as the difficulty of maintaining buildings and finding people to do good work.
- Some members of the community do not understand the responsibility of being a landowner - the amount of money and time that it takes to maintain properties. Community members like to see the open space but don't understand the responsibilities associated with it.
- Complaints from neighbors can be a burden on landowners. Landowners regularly need to manage land and make improvements/ changes to their property to continue operations (such as farming).
- Taxes are making it hard for landowners to continue to own property in the town. As one landowner said, they will be "taxed out" if this pattern continues.
- Several landowners mentioned problems with soils - erosion, runoff, water tables and flooding problems.
- External expectations on the part of the community create pressure on landowners.

Town of Saugerties Open Space Plan Landowner Focus Group Meeting Notes

Question 3: What do you see as the most pressing threat to maintaining your land (if you want to do so)?

- Taxes.
- People telling us what to do with our land.
- Trespassing (and potential litigation).
- We will be “zoned out.”
- Be aware that zoning changes create changes in the cost of development for a landowner/developer which results in a different type of development/demographic in the town.
- Lack of a clear, concise clearinghouse of information about the various financial options available to landowners.
- The open space plan could be a threat.

Question 4: What kinds of tools or incentives do you think would be most appropriate for preserving land in Saugerties?

- We should do a survey of landowners to find out if they want to sell.
- The idea of the commons (Kingston Commons as an example) was mentioned.
- Development credits could be sold to create funds for preserving open space.
- Wind power and other ways for landowners to diversify their investments and use of the land for income could be promoted/developed.
- Use revenue from new development to fund a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) for landowners who are preserving open space (this would require some analysis and judgments on what size properties to include, etc.)
- Provide more information on the distribution of landowners - how many landowners hold how many acres?

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Town of Saugerties Open Space Plan

Public Meeting: April 27, 2009

Group Discussion Notes

The meeting began with a presentation highlighting the purpose and background of the open space plan; a summary of the input received from the public and from focus groups; a review of the mapping and inventory for the plan; and a summary of draft goals and strategies. After the presentation, participants formed three small working groups of 10-20 people. These three groups discussed the 10 goals and strategies presented and helped to identify priorities.

The notes that follow are written as they were recorded in the large groups and reflect the comments of all individuals who participated, not necessarily the group consensus.

John's Group

General comments:

- This initiative seems to be... “avoiding a Long Island issue”
- Land conservation does not conflict with economic development - it's about a better investment in the future
- Reasonably constrain development, using judgment
- Goals 1 & 2 can be done with a partnership approach - come together to reach some type of consensus
- Create a place where kids want to stay
- Many concerns about taxes being too high
- A lot of vacant, underutilized, worn-out properties - should be seen as an opportunity
- Don't over-think the plan. Get something reasonable adopted and accomplished.
- Consider water bodies - sensitivity, buffers
- The Lower Esopus is the receiving area for the entire watershed - 7 communities working together

Priorities:

- Goal 4 - land use vision - plan ahead to avoid helter-skelter development, good planning can provide a cost savings, need to have a balance with development and open space
- Goal 2 - education, cost savings
- Goal 10 - minimize impacts of climate change

Melissa's Group

General comments:

- There may be an overemphasis on Bristol Beach. May be good to apply some pressure, but would not spend a lot of time on it.

- The plan should consider open space opportunities for various age groups, such as pull-offs along roads. Also should consider open space in the context of how we travel.
- One idea for moving forward: Identify priority areas; conduct build-out/fiscal; get buy in/ support from community; develop a financing mechanism such as a bond
- Mitigation for environmental impacts can be used to preserve land, such as the case where funds were used along the Esopus Creek
- Allow people who own the land to stay here and use it- tax abatements, term easements, more business
- State regulations/zoning can be an impediment to small-scale businesses/cottage industries
- Goal #10 is a broad topic that deserves its own process/committee
- The idea of preserving scenic views and experiences from the road is missing from the plan
- Promote higher density in areas with sewer and water
- Revive the cottage industries
- Don't hinder farmers and open space friendly businesses
- Hiking trails through farms could be good for recreation/tourism where it does not cause an impact on the farming (lots of these in Europe)

Priorities:

- Users guide (goal 1, strategy b) *Note: the town has developed a "Discover Saugerties" guide to town parks and recreational areas- will be available very soon.*
- Goal 1, strategy C - developing and connecting trails, parks, sidewalks, etc.
- Goal 2 - promote the values of open space
- Goal 3, strategy B - term easement
- Goal 6, strategy B - having CAC representation on the planning board

Jeremy and Leanne's and Group

General comments:

Why continue with the plan updates?

- Maximize resources
- Correspond to county plans
- Planning is an ongoing process
- Could provide incentives/education
- Encourage best development balanced with open space/build-out

Priorities:

- Encourage tax reform
- Balance economic development with quality of life (Winston Farm)
- Protect agricultural resources/prime soils

APPENDIX B
SAUGERTIES WATER RESOURCES

The following studies and plans have been prepared in regards to Saugerties' water resources:

1. Physical habitat assessment, chemical testing and benthic macro invertebrate analysis of:

PLSO1 Lucas Kill, at 1008 Blue Mt. Rd, St First Riffle downstream of Saxton Kill.

PLSO2 Plattekill, upstream of Reservoir, at village fishing access site on Van Veerden Rd.

PLSDO3 Plattekill, at Herricks Bridge at Rt. 212, Crossing

PLSO4 Plattekill, downstream of Mt. Marion School's storm drain.

PLSO5 Plattekill, at 50 Schoolhouse Rd, upstream of Old Road

While the NYSDEC funding ran out before this report was filed, the results of the findings are available. Prepared by Martha Cheo, Hudson Basin River Watch, Inc. under the NYSDEC Town of Saugerties, 2007

2. Physical habitat assessment, chemical testing and benthic macroin vertebrate analysis of:

Sawyerkill Creek, 8 Mynderse St. (Anchorage Farm) Saugerties, Town of Saugerties, May 20, 2006

Hudson Basin River Watch, Martha Cheo

3. Physical habitat assessment, chemical testing and benthic macro invertebrate analysis of:

Plattekill Creek

Hudson Basin River Watch, Martha Cheo and Protect the Plattekill Creek & Watershed Ltd., Town of Saugerties, June 2006

4. Evaluation of health of Plattekill Creek & over all water quality

Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts of Plattekill Creek Stream Walk Program (UL. CO. Soil & Water) and Protect the Plattekill Creek & Watershed, Ltd., Town of Saugerties, July 10 & Sept. 2, 2004.

5. Conserving Natural Areas & Wildlife in Your Community (Disk)

Hudson River Estuary Program. Contains sections of Town of Saugerties.

Fran Dunwell (DEC)

6. Maps:

All watersheds in Town of Saugerties, NYSDEC

Detail watershed map of Plattekill watershed map, The Catskill Center, Arkville, NY

7. River Reconnaissance Report Lower Esopus Creek, Ulster County

October 2008. Prepared by Milone & Macbroom, Inc. Final report available on Disk. Concerns 2005 flooding of the Esopus Creek.

8. Flood of April 2-3, 2005, Esopus Creek Basin, NY. USGS & Federal Emergency Management Agency.

9. Hudsonia & DEC, Hudson River Estuary: Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Study Out Reach Program, Karen Strong.

10. EMC, Miriam Strouse, Water Quality Standards for Coliforms on the Plattekill Creek at Fish Creek Bridge, Grant D. Morse School & Mt. Marion School.

10/17/05. Comment by Scott Cuppett, DEC