

To: The Ancram Town Board
From: The Ancram Conservation Advisory Council
Subject: CAC Year End Report for 2020
Date: January 5, 2021

2020 ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Due to the Corona Virus, the Conservation Advisory Council met largely by zoom in 2020. Although meeting by zoom has its limitations, we continued to be an active and productive council in terms of providing the town with advisory input and education on environmental conservation.

1. The *Columbia Paper* reprinted our 2019 Year End report.
2. Biodiversity Map and Work: We sent out an update to the town and invited landowners to contact us if they would like us to review any of the biodiversity habitats on their land. We did a field check at Helen Bodian's land on Carson Road and checked six areas, including vernal pools and hardwood swamps.
3. Planning Board: Erin Robertson provides monthly updates on activities of the Planning Board and seeks our advice on environmental issues. We reviewed a house site within the scenic corridor on Route 22 and wrote substantive recommendations to mitigate environmental and visual impact of this new home. In our opinion, the current regulations need to be better enforced, and in some cases strengthened, to protect the scenic corridor.
4. The Roe Jan Watershed Association (RJWA) continued on with water sampling at 2 locations in Ancram. The results are posted on their website: <https://www.roejanwatershed.org/>.
5. CAC Ongoing Training: Seven of our members attended, virtually, the Fall Sexual Harassment town wide training. One member reviewed the training on their own and another member will schedule a future date. Jane and Walter attended the Hudson River Estuary Program's Conservation and Land Use 101 Webinar: "Best Practices for Local Environmental Reviews". Colleen attended the 5-hour credit, "Headwater Streams: identifying and protecting an essential resource" on August 3-6. Walter attended the CLC forest conservation workshop. Jamie attended 20 hours of seminars with New Directions in American Landscapes on how to create greater biodiversity in our landscapes.
6. We contributed multiple papers to the ZRC on environment-related topics including: solar farm regulations, logging regulations, major and minor subdivision regulations, and improving the ridgeline and steep slope protection regulations.
7. Following our nomination, Chaseholm Farm was awarded the EMC 2020 Good Earthkeeping Award.

8. We contributed to the Ancram newsletter on a paper (written by Bob Moss) on how to attract birds and we are contributing to the upcoming newsletter with an educational paper on forest conservation.
9. By public request and with the support of the Doodletown Road community, we prepared a July 29th letter asking DEC if they will reconsider their plan to clear and log 75 acres at the Doodletown Wildlife Management Area. Approximately 10 neighbors signed the letter with us. DEC responded to our letter in August and then we responded to DEC on September 2nd with continued objections to their forest clearing plans. We are awaiting a response from DEC on the September letter.
10. We made numerous calls to Dutchess County Transportation and DEC regarding their need to provide better protection for the turtles and snakes that were trapped on the new rail trail by the long sedimentation barriers—causing them in many cases to suffer and die. Our pressure was part of a larger response from the community to remedy this situation.
11. We provided input on the Town's updated procurement policy in order to strengthen the purchase and use of recycled paper and sustainable cleaning products.
12. We reviewed the Community Solar Programs and noted the needs for the buyer to beware in terms of where these farms are being located. Although Solstice's aim is to locate on brownfields and marginal land versus prime farmland, it is important that we are vigilant about this. We forwarded to the ZRC, Hudsonia's paper on locating solar farms with sensitivity to the environment.
13. CAC/ Art Bassin wrote a letter to the NYS Senate to pass A.8349/S.5612A that will extend state protections to 41,000 stream miles in New York. This legislation is vital to offset the impact of the Trump Administration's new Navigable Water Protection Rule (which replaced the Obama-era Clean Water Rule on June 22nd).

PLANS FOR 2021

1. Continue to meet primarily by Zoom until the Corona Virus threat is mitigated by widespread vaccinations.
2. Continue to provide input to the Planning Board on site plan reviews that have sensitive environmental factors.
3. Prepare public education memos on invasive Asian worms and the importance of reducing lawns and reducing the application of lawn chemicals.
4. Reach out to the town about the health of the Roe Jan watershed, providing recommendations on how we can improve the river water quality.
5. Continue to urge the town to take advantage of available grant money for culvert replacements. Since Trout Unlimited completed the Ancram priority plan on culverts that need replacement, Ancram continues to be in an exceptional position to win grants.
6. Continue the major review of zoning regulations and prepare additional advisory memos to the Zoning Revisions Committee on upcoming topics including forest conservation and stream protection.