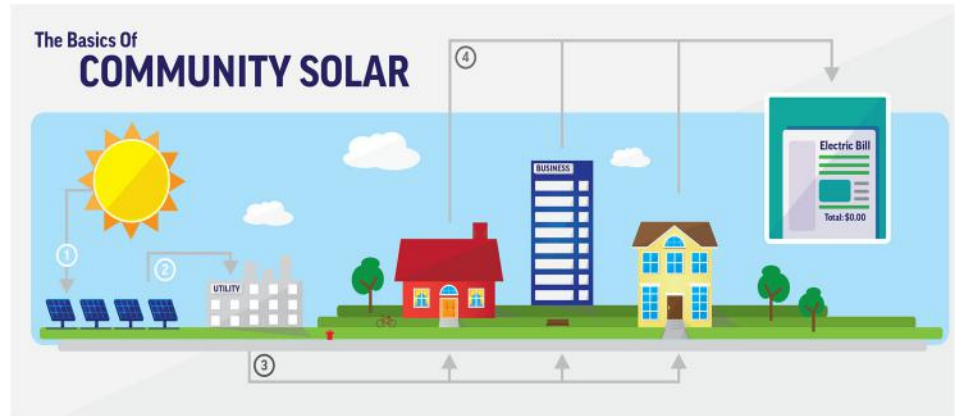


Community Solar Opportunity Comes to Ancram

By Suzan Flamm

Having wrapped up its lighting efficiency initiatives – free LED bulbs for households and an LED streetlight conversion – the town’s Climate Smart Communities Task Force has a new bright idea: access to solar power for local homes and businesses. Soon, Ancram residents will be able to pay less for electricity and lower their carbon footprints by signing up with Solstice, a company that connects people to community solar farms and manages customer accounts. In November of 2020, Ancram’s town board voted to support this initiative, upon the recommendation of the Task Force and Ancram’s Conservation Advisory Council. Enrollment should be available before spring of this year.



1. Sunlight hits the solar panels in the community solar field, generating electricity.
2. The electricity generated flows through an on-site meter to the electrical utility grid.
3. The utility company measures the electricity generated, calculates a dollar value for the power, and distributes this dollar value proportionately to the members of the community solar program (residents, businesses, municipalities).
4. The value of the solar electricity produced from the array is applied as a monetary credit to each member's electric bill.

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According to Colleen Lutz, the volunteer member of the Task Force leading this drive, “Residential energy use accounts for roughly twenty percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. We can all support renewable energy, and save money at the same time, by taking advantage of community solar. Plus, everyone who signs up will get a \$100 enrollment bonus.”

A community solar farm is an array of panels usually owned and operated by a private company and installed in a sunny location. Energy produced at community solar farms typically goes directly into the “grid”. The grid refers to the electrical network comprised of power generators, transmission lines, substations and transformers which together deliver power to end users. Participating with Solstice allows people to connect to one of these farms with

no upfront expense, in contrast to the investment required to install solar panels at their own homes. For some, rooftop solar is not even an option. This may be because they are renters, or because their roofs are shaded by trees, or because of that upfront expense. Those who choose to enroll with Solstice will not need to install anything, nor will there be any change in the way electricity is delivered to their homes. The only difference is the cost savings subscribers will enjoy.

How Does It Work?

Residents who enroll with Solstice will receive two utility bills each month: one from Central Hudson and one from Solstice. Central Hudson reimburses each Solstice customer for the amount of electricity produced by their share of the

(Continued on Page 2)

COMMUNITY SOLAR

(Continued from page 1)

solar farm each month, which appears in the form of credits on the electricity bill. Depending on the time of year, and the number of sunny days in the billing period, the amount of these credits might result in a zero balance on their Central Hudson bill. Customers will receive a second bill from Solstice, which will show the total cost of energy at a discounted rate. These discounts will add up to annual savings of just under 10% on their total electricity costs.

An Example

Let's say an enrollee's Central Hudson bill is \$100, and they are entitled to \$90 in solar credits for that billing period. The balance due on their Central Hudson bill would be \$10. The Solstice bill in this hypothetical would be about \$81. Thus, instead of paying \$100 that month for electricity, the community solar user would pay \$91. Over a period of years, the savings become significant. Town Supervisor Art Bassin says, "Solstice is a great opportunity for residents to take advantage of solar-generated electricity and save money while being sensitive to and supportive of environmental concerns." He adds that "once the

details are in place, we will send out an Ancram email, and Solstice will reach out to everyone by mail with instructions for signing up."

The Town of Ancram Benefits As Well

Besides the \$100 enrollment bonus for individuals, the town itself will receive \$100 for everyone in Ancram that participates, to be used towards an initiative of Ancram's choosing. Enrollment will be available for both homes and businesses, and the town's municipal structures are also eligible. Steph Speirs, Solstice's CEO, explains that the "mission at Solstice is to increase the accessibility of affordable renewable energy. We believe deeply in working directly with municipalities who are committed to building a clean, green future for New York."

Solstice is currently signing up customers for "Landau," a 2.7 MW solar farm in the town of Ulster. This solar farm will generate enough power for approximately 400 homes serviced by Central Hudson and consists of two installations on three separate parcels that total roughly 64 acres. According to Solstice, the solar panels are situated on only a portion of these acres. Also according to Solstice, the solar farm was developed in compliance with local zoning codes and New York State's Environmental Quality Review Act.



A Note From The Editor

Is the News missing any important stories? Does it adequately include the perspectives and interests of all residents: families whose forebears settled here 200 years ago; relative "newcomers" who have been living in Ancram full-time or part-time for 10, 20, or 30 years; and those who have more recently moved to the area, perhaps as a result of the pandemic?

The staff of the Town News is committed to reporting on issues of interest to the whole Town and its citizens. To do that effectively, we need to hear from you about topics you would like reported on, voices that should be heard, opinions that should be shared. Or, if you would like to try your hand at reporting, or submit photos, please be in touch.

The Ancram Town News is now delivered directly to every Ancram resident with a local mailing address, both street addresses and PO boxes. It is also sent electronically to everyone on the Ancram email list.

If you wish to receive the Town News in hard copy and have a non-Ancram mailing address, please email me your address at AncramTownNews@gmail.com. If you wish to be added to the Town's email list, contact abassin@townofancram.org.

Taconic Hills Students Share Their Personal Stories At AOH

By Lucy Sheldon, Town News Youth Reporter

This past Fall, at the height of the pandemic, Paul Ricciardi, a co-director of the Ancram Opera House, worked with a class of sixth-graders at the Taconic Hills Elementary School to write and recite a life experience they had. Mr. Ricciardi managed to work online with 140 students in 11 different classrooms to encourage them to communicate a memory or past experience on paper and then read aloud their stories in front of their peers. This was the first time Ricciardi had ever worked with kids in this sort of environment, and he had the added complication of teaching remotely via Zoom. While the students were sitting in the classroom in-person with their teacher, Mr. Ricciardi could only be seen on a screen. Despite these challenging obstacles, every student completed and performed his or her story for the class without a problem. Mr. Ricciardi was so impressed with their work that the Ancram Opera House offered an open Zoom to allow a much larger audience to hear the stories of any volunteers from the classes, and he recruited about 13 students to perform their story.

Claire Friedrich, who lives in Ancram, volunteered to participate by reciting her story for this larger group. She is an 11 year-old sixth grader at Taconic Hills Elementary, and she wrote a one-page story on her sledding accident. Writing stories was nothing new to her: "We write stories every Monday and I always raise my hand to share mine." But getting to perform them for an audience outside of her class was new and she quite enjoyed it. In fact, Claire said she was surprised that she wasn't nervous. "It wasn't stressful at all. I really liked it and if I was given the opportunity, I would do it again."

The building that now houses the Ancram Opera House was estab-



Claire Friedrich, an Ancram sixth grader at Taconic Hills, told her personal tale of a sled ride gone awry as part of the Ancram Opera House's Real People Real Stories: Taconic Hills Edition.

lished in 1927 as the Ancram Grange #955, and was repurposed and renamed the Ancram Opera House in 1972. It is located on County Route 7, just outside Ancram's town center. Jeffrey Mousseau and Paul Ricciardi have just celebrated their fifth season as co-directors of AOH. They offer workshops for storytelling and playwriting, and have produced a compilation of performances ranging from plays to storytelling. The cast of the performances at Ancram Opera House have primarily consisted of adults until this past fall when Mr. Ricciardi started working with the Taconic Hills students, culminating in the production *Real People Real Stories: Taconic Hills Edition*.

The student performances wrapped up the Ancram Opera House's fifth season, and was the 10th installment of *Real People Real Stories*. Beth Flores, teacher and librarian at

Taconic Hills, was on the ground working with each of the students and keeping them engaged and focused on the task at hand while Ricciardi gave the assignments and ideas. Ricciardi so enjoyed the experience that he hopes to make it a regular add-on to the other projects at the Opera House. He said that working with students was so much fun because they are open to sharing their thoughts and less guarded than adults. This pandemic has wrought so much sadness and suffering, but there are some really beautiful experiences that have come out of this moment, and this collaboration is one that hopefully will live on.

If you would like to see and hear Claire Friedrich tell her story, along with other local kids, you can do so at www.ancramoperahouse.org/rprs-taconic-hills

Broadband Progress!

Ancram Now at 70-80%

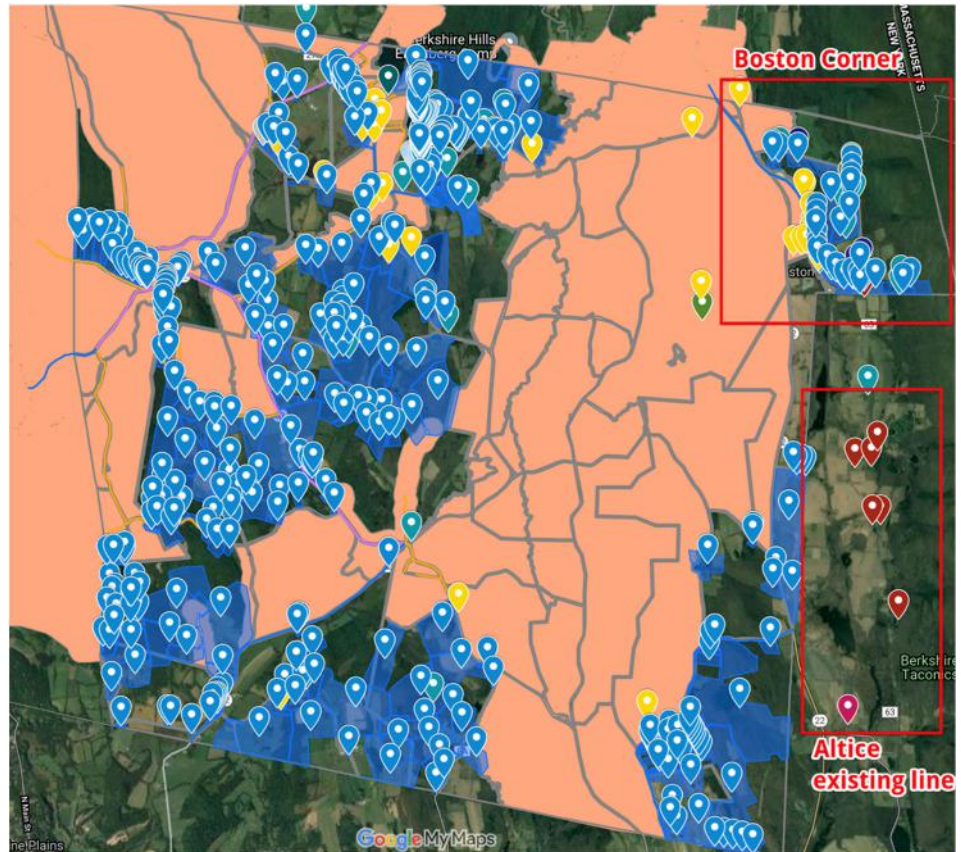
By Bobbie Slonevsky

The last time we provided an update on broadband in the Town News (Winter 2019 issue), almost *no one* in the Town of Ancram had broadband. Consolidated Communications (CCI) had just finished laying its trunk fiber lines, funded by grants from the NYS “Broadband for All” program. The company was on the verge of offering high-speed service to the addresses assigned to it: 206 in Ancram, 276 in Ancramdale, and none in Boston Corner. Charter/Spectrum had upgraded its existing video network to fiberoptic cable and was offering broadband, but only to its legacy customers. Town Supervisor Art Bassin’s estimate at the time was that “only a handful of households” in Ancram enjoyed the high-speed technology.

What A Difference Two Years Make

“A lot has happened in the last two years,” says Siddhesh Karmali, Chair of the Ancram Broadband Committee. To chart this progress throughout the hamlets, Karmali created a map, as seen here. The orange sections represent CCI’s follow-through—households that now have broadband thanks to state funding. A small cluster of homes in Boston Corner, denoted by the yellow markers, also subsequently received state-funded and CCI-implemented broadband. The blue markers, Karmali explains, are those addresses that were not covered by state grants and where the broadband gaps are likely to be today; nevertheless, a portion of them could now have fiberoptic service through various mechanisms:

- Some are Charter’s legacy cable customers who were upgraded to fiber Internet.
- CCI, at its own expense, connected select additional households that represented a good return on investment, *i.e.*, those located near their existing trunk line.
- Similarly, Charter, who was under a Public Service Commission (PSC) mandate to wire up 145,000



The current state of broadband deployment in Ancram: orange = recipients of broadband through state funding; blue = residences where the broadband gaps are, though some of these might have secured broadband through some other means; yellow = a small cluster of homes in Boston Corner that have broadband; maroon = Altice fiber/cable line in the Town of North East. Reprinted with permission of Siddhesh Karmali. For future updates, visit <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1vz6ulzlstMY67f0LtLFmkeaj88Zc1OVd&usp=sharing>

unserved or underserved addresses across New York State at the company’s own expense, offered broadband to certain non-legacy customers in Ancram who required only minimal investment.

- Another segment of the population agreed to pay CCI or Charter individually—usually between \$3,000 and \$8,000—to lay the necessary fiber infrastructure to connect their homes. “Lucky” neighbors in proximity to them also benefited.

That is pretty much where we are today: at an estimated broadband coverage of 70–80% of the town’s

residents. It was a long time coming! And, yet, that was the relatively easy part. In the Broadband Committee Chair’s own words, imminent and future successes in securing broadband for the remaining 20 to 30% have required, and will continue to require, “street-by-street, trench warfare” (unless there is a major infusion of funding).

In The Trenches With Committee Chair Karmali

Unfortunately, one of the Committee’s early guerilla efforts largely failed, but serves to demonstrate the relentless and granular lengths to which it will go. Back in the summer of 2020, continued moni-

toring of New York State's Broadband Program Office and close scrutiny of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) maps revealed that (1) a new funding grant was in the offing, and (2) several Ancram census blocks (the unit by which grants are assigned) had been *mistakenly* characterized as already having broadband. Karmali immediately organized a letter-writing campaign among the residents in those blocks to correct the erroneous designation, so as to make those locations eligible for the coming state funding.

Emails and letters were sent to: the FCC, Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressman Antonio Delgado, New York State's Empire State Development Corporation and PSC, and the State Legislature's Didi Barrett and Daphne Jordan. In fact, the mapping mistake was eventually acknowledged and corrected. But, by that time, it was too late to apply for the grant.

Nevertheless, other mistakes—addresses in census blocks that were covered by state money but were skipped over—were also discovered. And, with pressure from the Committee, those homes have since been wired up. Then there are another 60 households about to come on line. Finally responding to protracted and insistent badgering, Charter has laid the fiber infrastructure and is scheduled to connect these addresses in the second quarter of this year.

To maintain sources of leverage, Karmali remains in close contact with many of the offices mentioned above, as well as with the Department of Agriculture (another source of federal funding besides the FCC), the more local Economic Development Corporation of Columbia and Dutchess Counties, neighboring towns such as North East, Pine Plains, Copake, Gallatin and Taconic and five Internet Service Providers (ISP) encompassing CCI, Charter, Altice (Optimum), GTel and Mid-Hudson.

Why bother with neighboring towns and ISPs that don't operate in Ancram? Karmali is hoping to convince the ISPs active in those other locales to enter the Ancram market. In general, it would be in the town's strategic interests to have multiple ISPs competing with one another. But more specifically, some of



Sid Karmali, Chair of the Ancram Broadband Committee, has spearheaded the effort to achieve high-speed internet access for all residents.

the neighborhoods that lack access to fiber internet today (most of the blue markers on the map) are on Ancram's borders; they are clearly closer to those other ISPs' footprints and may be more cost-effective for them to reach.

For example, Altice is active in the Town of North East. If it can be nudged northward, Boston Corner could get coverage in short order. The same is true of GTel in Pine Plains and Mid-Hudson in Copake, although these latter two are small companies that are unlikely to want to go head-to-head with the bigger CCI.

Cost Remains The Primary Obstacle

The issue in all this is, of course, money. The still unserved households in Ancram consist mostly of those that are spread out and therefore more

expensive to wire (including farms), as well as older and less Internet-savvy individuals who are not clamoring for or willing to pay out-of-pocket for the technology. CCI doesn't view these locations as being a profitable business option. Charter, for its part, will this year probably satisfy its 145,000-address mandate here and in other parts of rural New York State and will refocus on its principal customer base, urban New York. So future fiber installation will seemingly depend on getting some third party to pay. Who? That is the question of the moment.

One possibility is a public/private partnership. In this model, which has worked in other places, the town borrows money to fund the fiber deployment. It then assigns the rights to service these new customers to an ISP, which in turn pays a "commission" back to the community so it can pay down the loan.

Another possibility is that federal/state funding will become available. This could be in the form of the stimulus package currently being discussed in Congress. Or it could be part of an infrastructure program. Those are our best bets. And either way, the work Karmali has already done—creating the map to graphically illustrate the situation, and maintaining a continuing dialogue with officials, ISPs and agencies—will undoubtedly give Ancram an advantage in securing wider broadband implementation.

Help Needed!

The Ancram Broadband Committee is looking for volunteers who can help with its efforts to make broadband available for all.

If you are interested, call or email Sid Karmali at:

917-302-6396
karmali.s@gmail.com

Harlem Valley Rail Trail Complete in Dutchess County: Focus Now on Columbia County

By Marie-Claude Stockl

The Millerton to Boston Corners section of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail has received consistent rave reviews from trail users since its official opening on December 12, 2020, which has given new impetus to fundraising efforts that will further extend the trail into Columbia County, all the way north to Chatham. Currently, there are 7½ miles of trail open in Columbia County, and 23 continuous miles between Wassaic and the Orphan Farm Trailhead in Copake Falls.

Dutchess County Government celebrated the accomplishment of the newly opened section connecting Dutchess and Columbia Counties with a press release and video of the new section, which can be accessed here: <http://dutchessny.gov/Departments/Parks/harlem-valley-rail-trail.htm>

One big hurdle is the crossing of Route 22 north of Orphan Farm Road to Black Grocery Road in Copake, where a railroad bridge used to be. In 2020, two generous donors pledged \$75,000 as a challenge grant for the Route 22 Crossing Project. HVRTA then turned to the community to raise the matching \$75,000. The fundraising challenge was met through many small and a few large donations from Ancram donors and others. Final permitting and bidding for the project is expected this year.

Until such time, Ancram residents can sport their snow shoes and cross-country skis along the trail, or put on their hiking boots for a more leisurely stroll in this remarkable place we call home. For information about the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, visit www.hvrt.org.



The railroad bridge that once crossed Route 22 at Black Grocery Road is now reduced to its foundation, but it marks the site for the new pedestrian bridge envisioned in HVRTA's Route 22 Crossing Project.

Local Law #2 Amends Ancram's 2014 Zoning Law

So What's Different?

By Cathy Redlich

Unless you are a regular attendee at Ancram Town Board meetings, you may not know that Ancram's zoning law recently underwent some significant revisions. Local Law #2's stated purpose is to implement Ancram's updated Comprehensive Plan and to "address ongoing and new issues facing the Town". These issues largely revolve around how residents use their land, with a focus on uses not contemplated back in 2014, such as short-term rentals (STRs), "special event venues", and RV's used as housing. The Zoning Law is a complex document, and anyone wishing guidance on a specific issue should consult it directly, but here are a few notable amendments enacted in Local Law #2.

Thinking Of Renting Out Your Barn for Weddings?

The beauty of our natural landscape has made the mid-Hudson Valley an increasingly popular venue for weddings and other celebrations, which has opened up some revenue opportunities for those lucky enough to own property here. But not everyone is keen on the idea of 200 guests flooding their neighbor's backyard for a shindig. So what does the law say?

First of all, the law does not impact a person using his or her own backyard for a private gathering hosted by them. It is intended to address special-event facilities that are contractually rented out for commercial use, the goal being to minimize the impact on surrounding properties and the rural character of our community. Under Local Law #2, such facilities require an annual Special Use Permit issued by the Town Planning Board, with approval conditioned on consideration of a detailed application, including a site plan, a description of all uses to be included in the facility, the maximum number of guests, times of operation, days of week on which events will be held, and a map showing the location and distance from surrounding residences. All such permit reviews require a public hearing.



While Ancram's scenic views make it a coveted location for celebrations, those seeking to operate special-event venues commercially will need to comply with the Town's newly enacted zoning law amendments, as codified in Local Law #2.

And that's just for starters. The owner/operator of such a facility also must follow conditions regarding traffic control and management, sound level (in some instances requiring the hiring of an acoustical consultant to conduct sound field tests for submission to the Ancram Building Department as part of the site inspection), on-site sewage disposal, and so on. And be sure to tell Cinderella that the music ends promptly at midnight on Saturday and Sundays, and earlier on all other days.

How About Turning Your House Into An Airbnb?

If you are now operating a short-term rental ("STR") on your property in Ancram—an Airbnb or VRBO, for example—you may be surprised to learn that you are already violating the zoning law. No need to panic, however, since Local Law # 2 provides a grace period until June 7, 2021, for existing STRs to become permitted.

Towns and cities across the country are grappling with short-term rentals, balancing the benefits of bringing tourism to their area and permitting residents to make extra income versus the adverse effects of an uncontrolled influx of nonresidents in residential areas. The new amendment recognizes the benefits to homeowners and the local economy of allowing short-term rentals. On the other hand, it also takes into account that not everyone in Ancram welcomes STRs. So as to strike the appropriate balance between competing interests, the amendment imposes provisions to protect the agricultural character of our community and the residential nature of its neighborhoods. Other concerns directly addressed in the law are public safety, parking, trash, noise levels, and the supply of affordable *long-term* housing. All persons operating a short-term

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LOCAL LAW #2

(Continued from page 7)

rental will have to apply for a Special Use Permit that requires a site plan, a detailed floor plan, proof of sufficient parking, adequate septic for the planned use, liability insurance, a mandatory inspection by Ancram's Code Enforcement Officer, and more. And a fee, yet to be determined, will be charged for this permit. Once the STR is in operation, the owner or property manager is required to be available to respond on site at the property within 30 minutes after being notified of a complaint by the Town CEO, the Sheriff's Department, the NYS Police, or another elected Town Official. Notably, when the owner applies to renew the permit, failure to be responsive to complaints, as well as any noncompliance with the requirements of the Zoning Law, may lead to a denial.

Can Your Son Live In The RV Parked In Your Backyard?

With Covid forcing many to alter their living and travelling arrangements, recreational vehicles have become temporary shelters for family members returning home, as well as an alternative to hotels and motels. Local Law #2, in addition to describing where a stored RV may be legally parked on your property (not on a public road or within a required setback, for example), also addresses occupied RVs. The new amendment provides that no permit is needed if an RV legally parked on your property is being used for "temporary" residential purposes, which means up to 15 days. After that, a RV Use Permit is required, which authorizes use of the RV as housing for up to 60 days.

What if special circumstances require longer than 60 days? The Town may grant an additional 60-day extension only in specific situations: if an

emergency or disaster has made your house uninhabitable, a RV may be used for housing while rebuilding or repairs are going on. So, to sum up, while your son can live in an RV on your property for up to two months, after that, continued occupancy is illegal.

And That's Just A Sampling

Local Law #2 addresses a variety of other issues as well, from commercial logging to accessory structures to flashing neon signs on your neighbor's front lawn. These amendments were drafted by the Zoning Review Committee in conjunction with outside consultants, and benefitted from input by local citizens, the Building Department, the Planning Department, and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

If you wish to peruse the complete Local Law #2 or the entire Amended Zoning Law, links to both may be found on the Town of Ancram website at www.ancramny.org.

The Forests of Ancram

By Ancram's Conservation Advisory Council

Ancram's forests are among its most valuable, widespread, and biologically significant resources. They are vital to the quality and quantity of the water in our wells, from which nearly all of Ancram's businesses and residents obtain their drinking water. They provide essential habitat and services for animals, plants, the human community, and our economy generally. (Town of Ancram Natural Resources Conservation Plan [Ancram NRCP] iii, 19, 28, 29, 40.) And they are also beautiful to look at! In this newsletter, we discuss these precious resources and ways our town and its residents can help preserve and enhance them. Our primary source is the Ancram NRCP, formally adopted by the town in 2015.

Benefits of Large Forests

"The most effective means of sustaining groundwater supplies, clear lakes and ponds, and cool, clean streams with stable banks are to maintain sub-

stantially forested watersheds, and maintain riparian zones [relating to the banks of streams and other water bodies] with undisturbed vegetation and soils. Forests with intact canopy, understory, and ground vegetation, and intact forest floors are extremely effective at promoting infiltration of water to the soils, and may be the best insurance for maintaining flow volumes, temperatures, water quality, bank stability, and habitat quality in streams and ponds." [Ancram NRCP 28-29]

In addition, large forests have values for biodiversity not duplicated by smaller woodlands. [Ancram NRCP 40] "Certain area-sensitive and disturbance-sensitive wildlife require large interior forest areas to maintain local populations in the long term. These include mammals such as bobcat, black bear, and fisher, and many neotropical migratory songbirds, such as black-throated blue warbler and scarlet

tanager (both species, among others, identified by NY's Department of Environmental Conservation as Species of Greatest Conservation Need), that tend to disappear from landscapes where only small forest patches remain."

[Ancram NRCP 40] Forests also support intermittent woodland (vernal) pools, which are crucial to the life cycles of several types of amphibians. [Ancram NRCP 35-6]

"Large forests are a declining habitat in the region, so protection of Ancram's large forested areas, and prevention of further forest fragmentation", are crucial to maintaining our community's biodiversity. [Ancram NRCP 40]

Benefits of Smaller Forests

"Smaller forests also have conservation value, both as habitats in their own right and as 'stepping stone' travelways for plants and wildlife between larger forest patches." [Ancram NRCP 40] For example, forest patches along a stream can



larger forest of about 7,500 acres extending into Copake, Gallatin, and Taghkanic (the photo above is of this area). [Ancram NRCP xiii, 77, 111]

Within Ancram itself, the forested hills generally have the largest expanses of unfragmented forests. [Ancram NRCP 53] These include Prospect Hill and vicinity and many of the other forested hills west of Route 3, as well as the large forests west of Route 82. [Ancram NRCP xiii] The largest forest located entirely within the town, more than 4,500 contiguous acres, is just west of Route 22 and includes Fox Hill, Kite Hill, and Round Ball Mountain [Ancram NRCP 111], portions of which are now part of the Columbia Land Conservancy's Overmountain Conservation Area.

In addition to the hillside forests, the Punch Brook valley, running from south to north in central Ancram, contains large forested areas with important scenic assets, and several significant

(Continued on Page 10)

create a riparian corridor that helps maintain water quality and wildlife habitat, and serves as a travel route for forest plants and animals. [Ancram NRCP 111] "Similarly, wooded hedgerows in an agricultural matrix often provide valuable breeding habitat, food sources, and travel routes for animals that would not otherwise use the agricultural landscape." [Ancram NRCP 111]

Benefits of Backyard and Street Trees

Indeed, even relatively isolated trees, such as those in our backyards, around our homes, or along roads and streets, play a role in improving the cleanliness of groundwater and air, reducing storm runoff and soil erosion, providing habitat for birds and other animals, moderating temperatures, storing carbon, and improving aesthetic appeal and economic value. [Elmendorf, Chunko, and Harmon, "Forest Stewardship: Backyard Trees," Pennsylvania State University 2008, 2016 (Penn State Extension No. 14), 2-3.] Street trees also add to the comfort and safety of users. [Ancram NRCP 61]

Ancram's Forest Resources

Figure 15 from the Ancram NRCP, reproduced to the right, graphically shows the layout of Ancram's largest forests. These include the Taconic Mountain range in eastern Ancram, which is part of an immense and substantially unfragmented 40,000-acre forest. [Ancram NRCP x, 111]

These Taconic Mountain forests "are a primary recharge area for the wetlands and streams of the Harlem Valley", "support numerous species of regionally rare" plants and animals, and "provide

wintering and breeding habitat for diverse songbirds and raptors". And "the ridge serves as an important bird migration corridor." [Ancram NRCP 49]

Other large forests in Ancram include the regionally significant forested area in northwestern Ancram, including the Doodletown Road area, that is part of a much

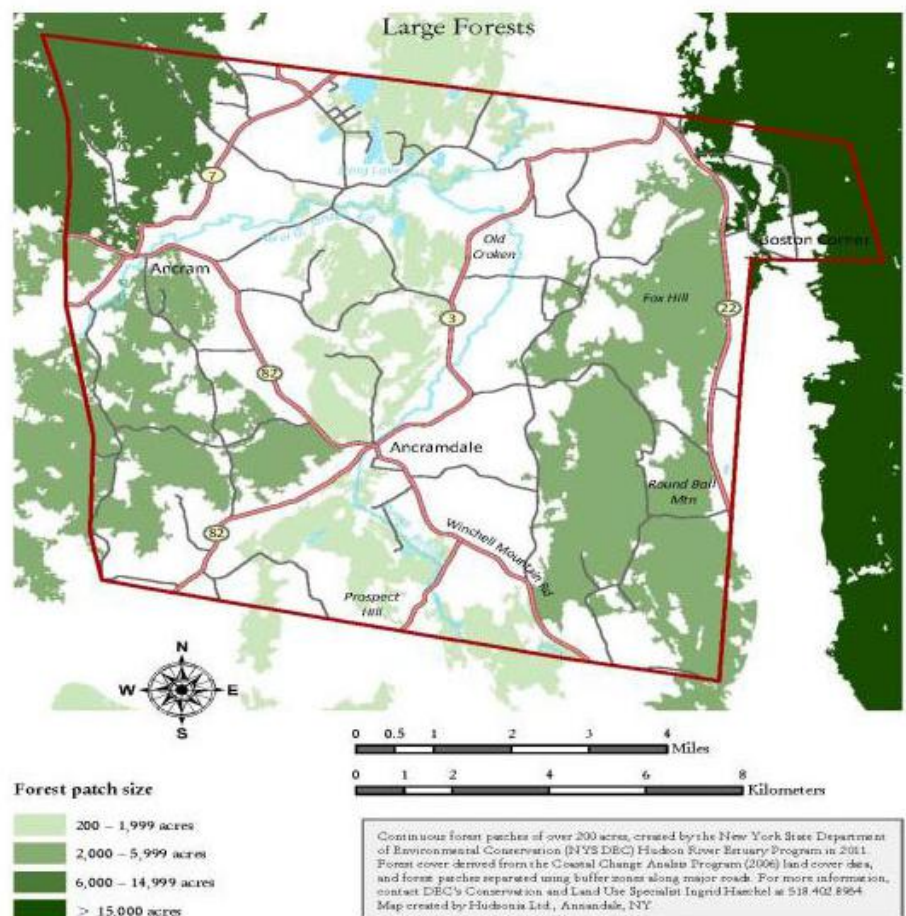


Figure 15. Large forests in the Town of Ancram, Columbia County, New York. Ancram Natural Resources Conservation Plan, 2014.

ANCRAM FORESTS

(Continued from page 9)

floodplain forests, as does the area in western Ancram drained by the Roeliff Jansen Kill. [Ancram NRCP xii, xiii, 76] Floodplain forests also occur in north-eastern Ancram, along significant lengths of the Noster Kill, and in smaller fragments along other Ancram streams.

[Ancram NRCP 47] Some of the forests along the Roe Jan Kill and the Noster Kill “are ecologically distinct and possibly irreplaceable”. [Ancram NRCP 47]

How We Can Protect Ancram’s Forests and Trees

The NRCP emphasizes a number of policies to enable our town’s forests to do their jobs for us. Among them, Ancram should protect our larger forests from fragmentation and restore woodlands to link smaller or otherwise isolated habitat patches. [Ancram NRCP iii, 23, 32, 40, 54] Conserving areas nearby and adjacent to our larger forests and existing conserved lands, and establishing conserved connections in the gaps between lands with existing conservation easements, would help. [Ancram NRCP x, xi, 73-76] Threats to our water resources would be further reduced by

avoiding the clearing of trees, shrubs, and grasses “on steep slopes or in areas of shallow soils”, “e.g., during road, driveway, or house construction”, “or along a stream or lake shore for landscaping or other purposes”, or “in the floodplain”. [Ancram NRCP 18] since riparian areas “with dense herbaceous or woody vegetation are especially effective at dampening floodflows and holding soils in place”, “broad buffer zones of undisturbed vegetation and soils” should be established and maintained “along streams, and around wetlands, lakes, and ponds.” [Ancram NRCP 30, 32, 47, 54]

In addition, we should avoid clearing our wooded properties of woody debris and leaves, a practice that has a long-term negative impact on the health of the forests and trees. The debris, rotting leaves, and dying wood are needed to feed the trees and provide habitat for many animals including beneficial insects. (For more on the benefits of rotting wood, see, George Wuerthner, “The Ecological Value of Dead Trees,” *The Wildlife News*, December 20, 2018, available at: www.thewildlifefews.com/2018/12/20/the-ecological-value-of-dead-trees/).

Further, around hayfields, cropland, orchards, and pastures, hedgerows including trees should be protected

and enhanced to help support pollinators and wildlife. [Ancram NRCP 54, 57] And sustainable forestry practices should be followed wherever forests are used for timber production. [Ancram NRCP 54]

Finally, on development sites, the preservation and planting of trees and other vegetation would help maintain pre-development patterns and volumes of surface water infiltration to the soils and, on properties containing wetlands, reduce the threats to these sensitive areas caused by development. [Ancram NRCP 19, 32]

The town has zoning laws to try to protect the environment. But, as land-owners, we each have the responsibility to make land use decisions on our own properties that will respect and care for the ecosystems we all depend on. If you are not sure what is appropriate and would like more information, please contact the Conservation Advisory Council (email Kim Tripp at ktripp2@hotmail.com to start, and the appropriate CAC members will be contacted and get back in touch with you).

The Importance of Preserving Ancram’s Forests, Woodlands, and Trees

By preserving, restoring, and reconnecting our town’s forests and woodlands, and even by preserving and planting trees on roadways and smaller lots, we can help protect the cleanliness and volume of our water resources, preserve the town’s scenic viewsheds and recreational resources, enhance flood control, clean our air, moderate temperatures, conserve biodiversity, and reduce the harmful effects of climate change. These effects will facilitate every important environmental goal necessary to the preservation of the town’s rural character sought by the 2019 Ancram Comprehensive Plan (which repeatedly emphasizes the town’s goal of preserving its rural character [Ancram Comprehensive Plan, e.g., 4, 11, 18-20, 36-37]).



Overlooking Doodletown WMA. Photo credit: Jamie Purinton



Taconic Range from Boston Corner. Photo credit: Jamie Purinton.

Acknowledgments and Additional Resources

The Ancram NRCP, on which this newsletter is based, was prepared by Hudsonia Ltd. and the Town of Ancram Conservation Advisory Council with funding from the Town of Ancram, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, and the Hudson River Bank and Trust Foundation. It is available on the town's website at: https://www.ancramny.org/ws/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ancram-NRCP_27-Jan-2015.pdf.

The Ancram Comprehensive Plan can be viewed at: <https://www.ancramny.org/ws/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Final-Comp-Plan-Part-1-with-edit-5-8-19.pdf>; and <https://www.ancramny.org/ws/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Final-Comp-Plan-Appendix-April-18-2019.pdf>.

Additional information on ways landowners can protect their forest resources can be found on the website of the Berkshire-Taconic Regional Conservation Partnership, including a "Resources" page with links to additional information sources: www.taconics.org/resources.

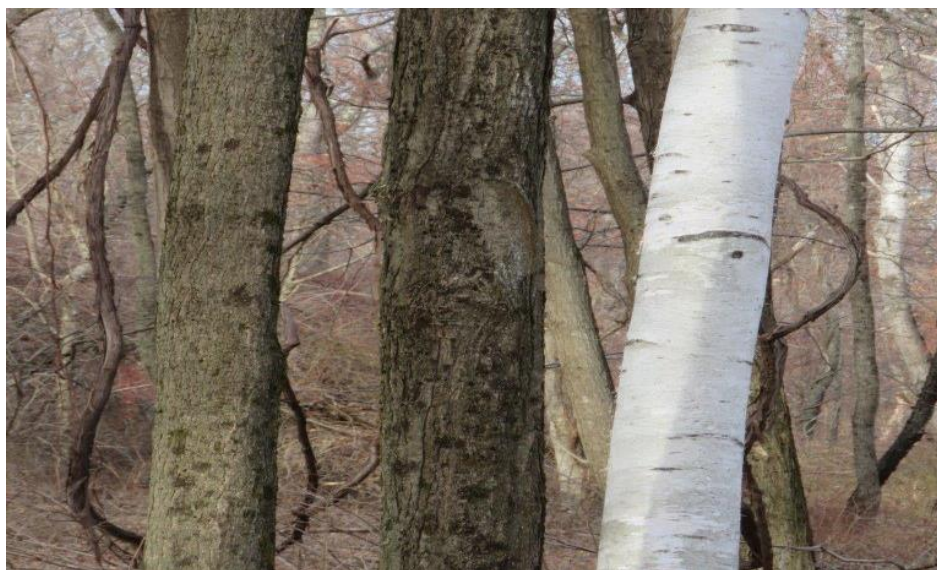
The Columbia Land Conservancy is cosponsoring a group of women landowners and natural resource professionals from the Catskills and the Hudson

Valley region of New York as a way to foster learning experiences and discussions about forest property: <https://facebook.com/groups/womenowningwoods/about/>.

The Housatonic Valley Association has put together a "Story Map" about the forests of the Northeast: Follow the Forest (arcgis.com).

The Farmscape Ecology Program has resources on our local ecology and the interaction between forests and plant and animal life. See, for example: "Forests," at: <https://hvfarmscape.org>.

Cornell Cooperative Extension has an issue of their magazine entitled, *In These Woods: Understanding Forest Ecology* (Issue 2, April 2020). The issue covers topics such as the history of forests in New York State, forest ecology, managing and caring for forests, sustainable harvesting, and identification of trees, as well as a section on additional resources. The issue is available here: www.ccecolumnbiagreene.org/resources/in-these-woods-april-2020/.



Overmountain Conservation Area. Photo credit: Jamie Purinton.

**Town of
Ancram**
1416 County Route 7
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Historic Farming Community Moving Forward



A local cross-country skier enjoys fresh snow as he heads south from Under Mountain Road on the new section of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.