

To: The Ancram Town Board
From: The Ancram Conservation Advisory Council
Subject: CAC Year End Report for 2021
Date: December 30, 2021

2021 ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Due to the Corona Virus, the Conservation Advisory Council met entirely by zoom in 2021 every month except July (due to the holiday). 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, and continued to make site visits in person when appropriate.

1. **Planning Board:** Erin Robertson provides monthly updates on activities of the Planning Board and seeks our advice on environmental issues. We reviewed two house sites within the scenic corridor on Route 22, house sites for a subdivision on Route 7, a brewery site on 22, a subdivision application for the Lampman Farm, and ongoing reviews for Ironstar. In all cases we made recommendations to Erin or wrote substantive recommendations to mitigate environmental impacts to the Planning Board. We await more responsive discussions between the CAC and the PB on our reviews.
2. After thoughtful and prolonged discussions throughout the summer, on October 12 we sent a memo to the **Planning Board** and Town Board calling for more substantive environmental reviews of applications, more rigorous discussions around “the maximum extent possible” and better adherence to due process (including need for minutes; providing information to PB, CAC and community in advance of meetings; and following the 10-day requirement for applications submittal prior to the meetings). We await a meeting with the Planning Board to discuss and hopefully resolve these issues. We expect the Town Board will need to weigh in on this given their role in appointing Planning Board members and overseeing the work of all boards.
3. The **Roe Jan Watershed Association (RJWA)** continued with water sampling at two locations in Ancram and 14 sites on the Roe Jan in May through October. We provided funding of \$160 (\$80 each) for these two sites to be tested six times at Bard Labs. The results are posted on the Bard College Water Lab site and the RJWA website <https://www.roejanwatershed.org/2021/11/30/roe-jan-2021-sampling-results/>. Unfortunately, the results from 2021 showed a decline in water quality. As a result of heavy summer rains, the Roe Jan did not meet the EPA standards in July. When considering the whole season, the Roe Jan only slightly exceeded the EPA criteria.
4. **CAC Ongoing Training:**
All members attended the Sexual Harassment Training sessions in November.

CAC members attended these educational events: “Getting Old: What Next For Even-Aged Forests,” Cornell University Cooperative Extension; “Invasive Species Management,” Columbia Land Conservancy; “An Ecological Approach to Forest Stewardship,” Dutchess Land Conservancy and the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies; “Ecology and History of Northeast Forests and Threats to Northeast Forests and Goals, Inventory & Planning”; “Forestry Application of User-Friendly GIS/GPS,” Cornell University Cooperative Extension; “Solar Projects in 3 sessions: Local Review, Planning, and Zoning for Projects in Rural Areas,” Columbia Land Conservancy; Forest Management Demonstration Tour of the Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Center and Sanctuary in Hillsdale, demonstrating activities designed to improve forest health and bird habitat, including patch cuts with reserves, invasive plant control, and deer fence installation, New York Audubon and Natural Resources Conservation Service; DEC webinar “Protecting Wildlife Habitat through Land Use Planning,” “Water Quality Monitoring in the Hudson River Estuary: December 16, 2021; “Protecting Wildlife Connectivity Through Land Use Planning,” December 7, 2021; “Invasive Species Summit,” November 16-17, 2021; “Conservation Commissions Conference,” October 21-24, 2021; “Scenic Resource Protection in the Hudson River Valley,” June 15, 2021” Model Local Laws to Increase Resilience,” April 20, 2021.

5. We contributed to the ZRC on environmental related topics including:
 - a. Substantial enhancements to environmental protection for Minor Subdivisions to be more consistent with existing protections for Major Subdivisions (the “Major/Minor memo”);
 - b. Substantial enhancements to environmental protection for the Ridgeline and Steep Slopes Overlay District (the “RSSOP” memo);
 - c. Creation of an Ancram Town Local Type 1 SEQR list (the “Local Type 1 SEQR” memo); and
 - d. Enhanced Logging Permit requirements (the “Logging” memo).
6. We provided recommendations to plant a native tree grove to members of the Ancram Historical Committee for the Steihl House site. This will have even greater importance if the Ironstar Retreat goes forward, given that the hamlet views looking east will be impacted by the proposed Ironstar Retreat structures.
7. Walter Williamson initiated a plan for the Long Lake Community to retain a forest ecologist and, if needed, other experts, to guide the Association in managing its 165 acres of woodland (to promote regeneration of diverse tree species and maintain and improve the health of their woods) and to manage their meadows and fields to create more diverse wildlife habitat and assist pollinators.

8. We responded to community member inquiries, forwarded by Supervisor Bassin, on control of the invasive bittersweet and concern from Carson road neighbors regarding the potential application for Floods to move their septic operation to their Carson Road property.
9. By public request and with the support of the Doodletown Road community, we continue to ask DEC for an updated management plan with little response from DEC. Jane and Jono volunteered for their community invasive plant management day.
10. We prepared an in depth public memo on the value of forests – this memo was circulated in the winter Ancram Town Newsletter.
11. Colleen Lutz is making great progress on assembling updated Natural Resource map overlays that can be easily accessed by the Planning Board and other committees and town agencies. Part of this included procurement of ArcGIS software at a discount price of \$100.
12. We followed the good work of the Climate Smart Community Task Force and reviewed and supported their recommendations for sustainable energy use at Town Hall.
13. We worked with the Hillsdale CAC to develop recommendations for environmentally sensitive development of land. We received a grant from CLC for \$250 to print copies of this brochure. This brochure will be coming out shortly for distribution to developers, realtors and builders.
14. We participated in the CLC-coordinated Columbia County CAC roundtable in order to share what we are doing in Ancram and to learn from other CACs .
15. Amy Gold joined the CAC in October.

PLANS FOR 2022

1. Our budget for 2022 of \$2,500 will be used for the CAC brochure, Roe Jan Watershed Testing and the map overlay work.
2. We will continue to meet primarily by Zoom until the Corona Virus threat is no longer an issue.
3. Continue to provide input to the Planning Board on site plan reviews that have sensitive environmental factors including Ironstar.
4. Prepare public education memos on importance of preserving our water quality. Reach out to the town about the health of the Roe Jan watershed, and provide recommendations on what we can do to improve the river water quality.
5. Continue to urge the town to take advantage of available grant money for energy conservation and climate change resilience.
6. Make ongoing recommendations on forest preservation and how we can update our regulations, following leadership of other area towns with model regulations.
7. Develop recommendations on the potential creation of Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs).

8. Training for town agencies, Town/Planning/ ZBA board members, and various committees on geospatial tools, including Google Earth and ArcGIS Online (AGOL).