

To: The Ancram Town Board  
From: The Ancram Conservation Advisory Council  
Subject: CAC Year End Report for 2022  
Date: January 13, 2023

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## 2022 ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Conservation Advisory Council met entirely by zoom in 2022.

1. **Planning Board:** Erin Robertson and Colleen Lutz provided monthly updates on activities of the Planning Board and sought our advice on environmental issues. We provided reviews for the Fulton and Forbes/ Bottle Tree Site (recommending need for better stream protection), the Ironstar development, and Velazquez property. For Ironstar we provided two substantial reviews including a comprehensive response to the EAF form answering in detail 18 questions regarding potential environmental impacts. Given the time and effort we have put into these reviews, we hope in the future that the PB will be more responsive in terms of discussing and considering CAC's written reviews in their public meetings.
2. Some important progress has occurred regarding our October 12, 2021 memo to the **Planning Board** and Town Board calling for more substantive environmental reviews of applications, more rigorous discussions around protecting the environment to "the maximum extent possible" and better adherence to due process. We credit Jayelle Hoffman for improving communication between the CAC and PB and carefully considering our recommendations. She has attended multiple CAC meetings and met with us at the Town Hall. We are optimistic about how more regular reviews of applications from professional planners and engineers will help ensure that the PB adheres more closely to the zoning laws in terms of environmental reviews. Nan Stolzenburg's recent PB training session was well attended by CAC members, and very informative. As per Jayelle Hoffman's recommendations, Nan Stolzenburg interviewed and included CAC's comments in her recent report on ways to improve the Planning Board process and reviews. Given our October 2021 report and Nan's report, we have a substantive agenda for a 2023 meeting with the Planning Board. We expect the Town Board will need to play an active part in overseeing the work of all boards.
3. Colleen Lutz continues to update the Natural Resource map overlays so they can be easily accessed by the **Planning Board** and other committees and town agencies. Ancram updated its \$100 subscription to the GIS software.
4. We recommended to the PB and TB, better **Building and Zoning Enforcements** in terms of both reviewing applications and enforcing permitted applications. The Velazquez property is an example of an applicant not following the PB approved application and the Storm Water Protection Plan (SWPP). The building inspector has recently started reporting to the CAC on the enforcement of the SWPP Velazquez application. We recommend that the PB include escrows and provision for engineering services for all future permits when there are SWPPs and PB environmental regulations involved.

5. Thanks to Colleen Lutz, a **Watershed Characterization Plan** was begun in September for the PunchBrook and Roe Jan. Participation includes numerous CAC members as well as members from Gallatin, Taghkanic and Copake. The plan will be completed at the end of 2023.
6. The **Roe Jan Watershed Association (RJWA)** continued with water sampling at two locations in Ancram – Wiltsie Bridge by Herondale Farm and the Hall Hill new bridge. In all there are 14 sites from Hillsdale to Germantown along the Roe Jan. Ancram provided funding of \$100 (\$50 each) for these two Ancram sites to be tested five times each, 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/>.

The results were for the most part favorable except for the “beach advisory” or high enterococuss in June at the Hall Hill Bridge test site.

7. As the **ZRC wrapped up their work** on environment-related topics, our contribution was limited this year to the discussion of and training on updating SCOZ regulations.
8. Walter Williamson continues his research and work towards conservation management of the forests that are part of the Long Lake Community. Walter has attended 15 educational events on forest conservation noted below.
9. We prepared an **educational memo** on what Ancram residents can do to conserve water use and improve our resilience to drought. We supported aquifer protection and James Kennedy’s initiative to do a water well study in the hamlet of Ancram.
10. We followed the good work of the **Climate Smart Community Task Force** and reviewed and supported recommendations regarding climate resilient projects for Ancram. Bravo to Ancram for becoming a Bronze level Climate Smart Community.
11. We worked with other **Columbia County CACs** to distribute the brochure (on how to more sensitively build a house) to area builders, contractors and realtors. We participated in the CLC-coordinated Columbia County CAC roundtables and some CAC members attended the County Climate Smart Festival.
12. In the spring we started doing **amphibian crossings** under the guidance of the DEC program and hope to build on public participation in 2023. We reported to DEC the number and type of species making crossings during the spring months as well as the number of deaths. This is a wonderful opportunity to save species and educate the public on the importance of wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity.
13. We made recommendations for the **Town Hall property** regarding ongoing care of birch trees and meadow management for the little bluestem meadow. The little bluestem is a native grass that supports numerous butterflies of conservation concern.

14. Regarding **CAC membership**, Jay Lorenz joined the CAC in June of 2022 and provides a valuable background in environmental regulatory review and wetland protection.
15. Jamie Purinton asked if anyone would serve as chair and thankfully this year we have two fantastic volunteers; the CAC fully endorsed David Dembo and Jane Meigs as **co-chairs beginning in 2023**.
16. **CAC minutes** are now posted on the Ancram website.
17. **CAC Ongoing Training:**  
All members attended the Sexual Harassment Training sessions in November and the majority of the CAC attended the PB training on December 1, 2022. And Walter has attended 15 educational sessions on forest management and forest ecology. Jane attended two workshops on habitat assessment and regenerative agriculture.

### PLANS FOR 2023

1. Although we only used a small portion (approximately \$450) of our 2022 \$2,500 budget, we would like to apply the balance to ongoing PB training by Nan Stolzenburg on the revised zoning and site planning regulations and continued publication of the brochure on how to site a house sensitively.
2. We will continue to provide input to the Planning Board on site plan reviews that have sensitive environmental factors and hope that the professional planners review will relieve our workload and enable us to focus on other projects.
3. Prepare public education memos on reducing lawn chemicals and use of petrochemicals as well as size of lawns devoted to unproductive grasses and improving habitat.
4. Continue to urge the town to take advantage of available grant money for energy conservation and climate change resilience.
5. Make ongoing recommendations on forest preservation and how we can update our regulations, following the leadership of other regional model regulations.
6. Consider developing recommendations on the potential creation of Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs).
7. Work with the ZRC to update the SCOZ regulations to explicitly add SCOZ protections to any new residential buildings.

### LISTINGS OF ONGOING TRAINING

#### Educational Training Completed by Walter Williamson in 2022

- 1/18/22. "The Woods in Your Backyard: Why They Are There". 1.5 hours. Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture Services, Penn State Extension.
- 1/24/22. "Ecology and Conservation of Old Growth Forests". 1.5 hours. University of Maine, Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation Biology.
- 1/26/22. "The Woods in Your Backyard: The Importance of Woods to Healthy Watersheds". 1.5 hours. Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture Services, Penn State Extension.

2/2/22. "The Woods in Your Backyard: Identifying Trees and Shrubs for Different Sites". 1.5 hours. Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture Services, Penn State Extension.

2/9/22. "The Woods in Your Backyard: Forest Ecology". 1.5 hours. Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture Services, Penn State Extension.

2/16/22. "Oh Deer: How Deer Shape Forests in the Catskills and Beyond". 1 hour. Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

2/16/22. "The Woods in Your Backyard: Providing and Enhancing Wildlife Habitat". 1.5 hours. Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture Services, Penn State Extension.

3/23/22. "Tree Identification for Beginners". 1 hour. Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

4/10/22. "Tree Identification". 1.5 hours. NY Master Forest Owner Program; Cornell Cooperative Extension.

4/21/22. "Supporting Forest Birds on Your Land". 1.5 hours. NY Master Forest Owner Program; Cornell Cooperative Extension.

6/15/22. "Managing for Old-Growth Forest Characteristics". 1.5 hours. Vermont Land Trust and University of Massachusetts Extension.

#### Training Sessions

11/10/22. "Preventing Sexual Harassment and Workplace Violence". Impact Training and Development; Jami Ehring. Town of Ancram, NY.

12/1/22. "Agriculture and Markets Law Restrictions on Local Zoning Regulation". Nan Stolzenburg, Consulting Planner.

#### Master Forest Owner Program:

6/11/22. NY Master Forest Owner Volunteer visit to property of Karen P., Hillsdale, NY. Preparation: 2 hours. Visit: 4 hours. Preparation of report and plan; 3 hours.

6/24/22. NY Master Forest Owner Field Refresher Course. 8 hours. Cornell Cooperative Extension Agroforestry Resources Center, Acra, NY.

#### Educational training completed by Jane Meigs in 2022

1. Hudsonia Workshop on Habitat Assessment Guidelines, June 2022.

2. Dutchess Land Conservancy Workshop--Earth Matters: Don Smith. The Answer is Soil Webinar on Regenerative Agriculture. December 6, 2022.