Basha Kill Panorama, photography by Stefan Tur

Basha Kill Inspires Wurtsboro Art Alliance Show

See article page 5; photos page 11

Basha Kill Spring, oil on panel by David Munford

Basha Kill Heron, acrylic painting by Steven Duffy

Fall Comes to the Basha Kill, watercolor by Midge Monat
MAILBAG:

Dear BKAA,
On behalf of the Orange County Horse Council (OCHC) of New York, we would like to tell you that we are so grateful that the BKAA is equine-friendly. We appreciate using these lands (Basha Kill) so much! We all love riding on this jewel of our area. We are a non-profit, who supports organizations that offer our members this opportunity.
Thank you again.
OCHC of NY
Patricia Bowens,
Treasurer, 2015-2017

July 14, 2017

Dear BKAA,
A donation of $100 from your Ulster Country neighbors, John Burroughs Natural History Society (JBNHS), to help with your efforts to protect important wildlands.
Best Wishes,
Lin Fagan
Treasurer, JBNHS

To the members of the Basha Kill Area Association,
I would like to thank you very much for awarding me the Catherine Abate Memorial BKAA Scholarship. Your generous scholarship is greatly helpful in allowing me to accomplish my goals, and I am extremely grateful. This fall I will be studying mechanical engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the Catherine Abate Memorial BKAA Scholarship will cover many of the textbooks and supplies I will need.
Thank You,
Zach Alexander

CONTACT THE BKAA
Paula Medley 845-754-0743, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. email: info@thebashakill.org website: www.thebashakill.org

CONTACT THE DEC
Environmental Conservation Officers (ECO's) & Forest Rangers Covering the Bashakill WMA for the NYS DEC (3/17)
ECO's: Officer Ricky Wood 845-665-5637 (cell) Officer Matthew Burdick 845-213-7891 (cell) Officer R.T. McNamara 845-346-6961 (cell) Officer Thomas Koepf 845-612-6099 (cell)
Forest Rangers: Peter Morehouse 845-239-1651 (cell) Alexander Virkler 845-905-6000 (cell)
Call 24-hour DEC Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1-877-457-5680 if the Officers are not available.

The Guardian is published quarterly by the Basha Kill Area Association Inc., PO Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790.
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Guardian Editor: Paula Medley

Mission Statement: Since our founding in 1972, our mission has been to protect the Basha Kill Wetlands and surrounding area from ecological degradation, to promote education and respect for the environment in general, and to preserve the beauty of the area.

We welcome new members who are interested in protecting the environment. Dues are $10 per person per year. BKAA is a not-for-profit corporation and donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.
website: www.thebashakill.org • e-mail: info@thebashakill.org
Autumn 2017 New Members & Donors

**Autumn 2017 New Members**

Ethan Alexander — Theodore W. Anderson — Kerry & John Beck — Thomas Frangipani
Aletha & William A. Henderson — Horsehoe Lake Preservation Association — Andrew I. Jacobs — Susan Leser
Jon Moscow — Ellie L. Richardson — Susan Richter — Paul A. Rubin — Thomas Selkirk — Marie Skwarlo
Tony Spina — William Yakowicz — Robert J. Zuccon

**Autumn 2017 Donors**

Donation for Catherine Abate Memorial BKAA Scholarships — Timothy P. Butler
Donation in Memory of Mary Alice Lebeau — Eleanor J. Symer & Charles Stebbins
Donation in Memory of Arthur Stout — Cecilia F. Walsh
Donation in Honor of Paula Medley — Janet Campbell

Kathie Aberman — Judith C. Adams — Anita Altman — Patricia D. Anderson — Anna M. & Burton M. Angrist
Apple Pond Farming Center — E. Susan & Robert T. Armistead — Jack Austin
Paula Lazov-Baldinger & Scott J. Baldinger — John J. Baranowski — Elinor B. Barber — Linda & Michael Bartle
Hank Bartosik — Irma L. Beckley — Paul C. Beinkafner — Patricia & Martin J. Bernstein — Marilyn & Roger Betters
Peter Blakey — Gail Boorstein — Galen W. Booth — Toby L. Boritz — Arlene D. Borko — Patricia Bowens
Joan & Hal Brill — Lorraine Brink — Jacqueline L. Broder — Jeffrey Broder — Scott D. Buchholz
Robert D. Campbell — Sadell & Irwin Cantor — Yvonne Caradec — Lynne D. Carlin — Eileen Anne Carney
Kurt W. Carney — Billie Mae & David Case — Virginia & Dr. Anthony Castrogiovanni — Jean Cellini
Barbara C. Chumard — Susan W. Cioffi — Patricia Edwards Clyne — Donna & David B. Colavito
Alice M. Cross — Warren D. Cuddeback — Elizabeth Cushing — William H. Cutler II — Leslie E. Da Leo
Cathy & Brad Dawkins — Alida De Boer — Eileen T. Decker — Sam & Wayne A. Decker — Mary Lou Deitrich
Helen M. & Raymond E. de Prado — Larry Kuntzke & Nancy A. DeVaux — Carolyn Diercksmeier — Paul DiMaggio
Patricia Di Stefano — Mary A. Donnelly — Gay Donofrio — Margaret E. Perkins Dreyer — Berle M. Driscoll
Carl S. Berkowitz & Linda M. Emanuel — Nancy English — Joan W. Everett — Scott Fairbanks — Maryallison Farley
Cathy A. Farris — Betty Glassman Feibusch & Frederic Feibusch — Sarah M. Fields — Ira H. Finkelstein
John T. Foufas — Thomas Franco — Thomas Frangipani — Mary A. Collier & Valerie Freer — James Leo French
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Sharon Hartnett & Robert J. Majcher — Steven Maleike — Mary J. Mancuso — Alvin Mann — Carole Marantz

*DONORS continued on page 4*
2017 BKAA Calendar of Events

All activities free and open to the public!

Saturday, September 23, 10am

Cano e/Kayak the Basha Kill with Scott Graber and Mike Medley

Join naturalists Scott and Mike for a late season venture on this first day of autumn. Bring your own vessel and binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch. Call Mike at (845) 754-0743 to register and for more details.

Sunday, October 15, 9:30 am

Hike the Shawangunk Ridge with Mike Medley

Moderately difficult hike, lasting 4-5 hours. Wear comfortable sturdy shoes and bring water, lunch and binoculars. Meet at the D&H Canal Kiosk at the Pat Moore Memorial Picnic Grove on Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro. Must register by calling Mike at (845) 754-0743.

Sunday, October 29, 9 am

Hike the Minisink Trail at Huckleberry State Forest in the Town of Greenville with Mike Medley

Join Mike on a beautiful 5 mile loop hike on the Shawangunk Ridge. Wear comfortable sturdy shoes and bring water and lunch. Bring binoculars. Carpool or travel in a caravan led by Mike. Meet at South Road fishing platform (Westbrookville end) at 9:00am. Absolutely must register for this trip by calling Mike at (845) 754-0743.
The Basha Kill Area Association and Wurtsboro Art Alliance (WAA) Joined in a Hugely Successful Bashakill Themed Art Show at the John Neilson Gallery

Brent Lyons, WAA President

On Saturday June 5th, an opening reception was held at the gallery with BKAA President Paula Medley and organization members distributing information on “The Kill” and providing the crowd with numerous goodies for the buffet table.

One of the largest gatherings to attend an event at the “Neilson” enjoyed one of the best art shows in Wurtsboro Art Alliance History as some 28 local artists’ works were displayed on the walls, while pottery, jewelry, sculpture, and mixed media pieces were featured on tables and fixtures.

We at the WAA thank Paula and the BKAA for their collaboration and ask the BKAA to join us again next June for another collective show. How about expanding this affair in the future to involve other environmental/community groups in an Annual June “Bashakill Bash” in Wurtsboro?

The reception ended with the Art Alliance presenting Paula with a framed print of Elly Knieriemen’s popular photograph, “The Swimming Bear.”

In closing, I invite all BKAA members as well as the general public to our beautiful John Nielson Gallery, located at 73 Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro. Hours are 12 noon until 4 PM on Saturdays and Sundays with an Artists’ Reception on the first Monday of each month.

Upcoming shows will be:
- September - Lakes and Streams
- October - The Mystical Forest
- November - Off Kilter
- December - Holiday Show and Sale, where many smaller “gift size” works of art will be available for purchase.

News Brief:

Paula Medley

Great Response to BKAA’s 2017-2018 Membership Drive

Thank you! Thank you! BKAA members, you are the BEST!!! BKAA’s leadership truly appreciates your EXTRAORDINARY response to this year’s appeal for extra contributions.

To date, 547, out of 800 members, have paid their dues, generating $5,470 into our operating fund. Additional regular account donations total $12,034. Legal fund contributions amount to $10,682.

Successfully operating educational and advocacy programs, however, necessitates EVERYONE’S support, so if you have not already paid your dues and, over 200 have not, please do so as soon as possible.

Thanks again.

IN MEMORIAM

With profound sadness, the BKAA announces the passing of valued members:

Henry R. Annibal
Victoria Paulding
Arthur Stout

The BKAA sends heartfelt condolences to Timmy, James, Patricia, members’ families and friends.
Kevin Kreischer donated this framed photo of a male wood duck (21” x 15”) for a raffle to be drawn during the BKAA Nature Watch Fundraiser on Sunday, September 24th at the Bashakill Vineyards from 4 to 6 pm. Raffle tickets are $5.00 each and can be purchased at the Fundraiser or by mail. If the latter, send your check, made out to the Basha Kill Area Association, to Paula Medley, President, BKAA, PO Box 1121, Wurtsboro NY 12790.

Nature photographer Kevin Kreischer has generously shared many of his photographs for use by the BKAA. The background photo for the BKAA website is his summer vista of the Basha Kill. A number of his other photos are also highlighted on the website. Additionally, he provided Basha Kill images for the National Geographic MapGuide Destination for the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area.
FUNDRAISER for the Basha Kill Area Association
Sponsored by the BKAA Nature Watch Program & Paul Deninno, owner of the BashaKill Vineyards

Wine / Beer Tasting
&
Live Birds of Prey Program with Bill Streeter from the Delaware Valley Raptor Center at 5:00 PM

DATE: Sunday, September 24, 2017
TIME: 4:00 – 6:00 PM
COST: $20 per person
LOCATION: BashaKill Vineyards,
1131 South Road, Wurtsboro

• Price includes a glass of Riesling on tap OR a glass of cream ale & the Raptor Program.
• Farm-to-table food will be available for purchase.
• $5 raffle tickets for a beautiful color photograph of a male wood duck (generously donated by local nature photographer Kevin Kreischer).

For more information, contact Kevin Keller at 845-434-6209 or Maryallison Farley 845-888-0261.

See you on September 24th!
As summer progresses, DEC hopes to finish several long-standing projects at the Bashakill. One of the main DEC accomplishments that occurred this summer was rehabilitation of the long driveway into the “Stop Sign” parking area on the north side of Haven Road (see photo). This driveway frequently needs maintenance and the situation reached a critical level this spring. While driveway repairs were not finished in time for the peak public use that coincides with spring migration, the improvements completed in early July should provide a better experience for visitors to this well-used access point for the remainder of the summer and fall. Additional maintenance activities at the other parking areas and driveways are also in the annual workplan and hopefully will be accomplished this fall as summer projects wind down and staff resources become more available. Similarly, work on the trail to the accessible waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing blind has not commenced, but our goal is to finish this prior to the start of waterfowl hunting season (October 7th). On a related note, the new kiosk that was constructed in the parking area on Haven Road by Eagle Scout candidate Amos Decker and his fellow scouts has provided a convenient and excellent venue for DEC to inform the public about the blind as well as the Bashakill in general.

Besides access work, DEC has several other ongoing endeavors at the Bashakill. One is control of the invasive plant, common reed (Phragmites australis), along Haven Road. DEC is working with a private contractor to chemically treat this small 0.2 acre Phragmites infestation to limit further spread into the Bashakill wetland. A second invasive plant that is proposed for control this year by DEC is Japanese Knotweed (Polygonum cuspidatum) which is present at several locations around the Bashakill. Additionally, DEC is collaborating with committed volunteers from BKAA to develop a pilot Japanese barberry (Berberis thunbergii) control project near the “Nature Trail.” This will consist of manually removing barberry from the forest understory in a targeted area by volunteers working under the BKAA’s volunteer stewardship agreement. Absence of barberry will hopefully allow native plant species to re-occupy the site and demonstrate effectiveness of this control technique. If this proves to be successful, and willing volunteers are available, there are many other places at the Bashakill where this project can be expanded.

The Department has also undertaken several wildlife surveys at the Bashakill in 2017, including conducting presence/absence surveys for golden-winged warbler and Eastern whip-poor-will, both target species of DEC’s Young Forest Initiative. Whip-poor-wills were again detected at several of the survey points (they were also noted during the 2016 survey) but breeding golden-wings were still absent. DEC contacted the BKAA’s Scott Baldinger for assistance on a statewide mute swan census held during August and Scott reported that no mute swan activity was noted at the Bashakill during the survey window.

As always, DEC thanks the BKAA and its members for their amazing volunteer efforts; especially during the Annual Cleanup and Nature Watch. If you have questions, comments, suggestions or just want to say hello, please do not hesitate to reach out to me - Nathan Ermer, Wildlife Biologist and DEC WMA Manager, 845-256-3047, nathan.ermer@dec.ny.gov.
The year 1972 was a pivotal benchmark for both the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) and Bashakill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) as the BKAA was founded then and the WMA was established by New York State following passage of an Environmental Quality Bond Act. Ever since, the organization and resource have been inseparable.

The BKAA, an environmental, all volunteer (800 member) non-profit, adheres to its Mission of protecting the Basha Kill wetland and surroundings from ecological degradation, promoting education and respect for the environment in general, and preserving the area’s beauty. Guided by this Statement, the BKAA determined its geographical focus to encompass the 3,000 acre WMA, located outside Wurtsboro, and its 36,000 acre watershed, or the lands through which streams flow on their way to the WMA.

The BKAA’s Mission recognizes that this Department of Environmental Conservation managed freshwater wetland, the largest in Southeastern New York, is an invaluable ecosystem: storing floodwater, cleansing and purifying groundwater, furnishing habitat for myriad flora and fauna, and affording diverse recreational opportunities. Its rich biodiversity is acknowledged in state and county Open Space Plans, while its almost 200 bird species yield designations as An Important Bird Area by Audubon and a Bird Conservation Area by New York State.

Wetlands, however, are extremely fragile and easily degraded by unwise development. Consequently, the BKAA employs a two-pronged strategy, utilizing education and advocacy, to achieve their conservation. Our extensive educational programming enables residents and visitors to physically, emotionally, and spiritually experience the wetland’s wonders. Once connected to the WMA, via hiking, fishing, birding, kayaking, horseback riding, individuals are more likely to safeguard it. So, the BKAA facilitates resource awareness by annually scheduling 15-20 outings, leading countless impromptu tours, as well as managing Nature Watch, where volunteers inform interested parties about eagle and WMA ecology. Additionally, the BKAA conducts on-site water testing, organizes a yearly cleanup, and engages in innumerable venues, like fairs, forums, and workshops, seizing every chance to illuminate a critical natural asset. Amplifying these efforts are an upgraded website, Facebook, E-mail Alerts, brochure, and quarterly newsletter, the Guardian.

Major threats to the wetland/watershed shift BKAA priorities to heavy-duty advocacy, which entails constantly attending town, planning, or zoning board meetings, participating in processes relating to environmental reviews, site plans, special use permits, variances, zoning, Comprehensive Plans, delivering testimony at public hearings, activating members, hiring consultants (attorney, engineer, ecologist, hydrogeologist), and, if all else fails, litigating. Networking is also a key component in the BKAA’s successful advocacy endeavors.

Whether educating or advocating, and, despite ongoing challenges, hundreds of hard-working BKAA volunteers have steadfastly remained committed to a vow undertaken 45 years ago to conserve an exceptional Sullivan County wetland. That this dedication continues today as strong as ever, constitutes the BKAA’s most notable achievement.

Interested in the BKAA? Visit our website at www.thebashakill.org or email info@thebashakill.org.

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Marsh birds who use the Basha Kill include rails, bitterns, several heron species, grebes, moorhens and the occasional loon. In the early 1990’s, ospreys began nesting at the Kill, and a few years later they were joined by a pair of nesting eagles. Red-shouldered hawks, broad-wings and red-tails may be seen courting in the spring. Screech owls, barred and great-horned owls are plentiful.

Want to know more? Go to thebashakill.org
The Case of the Masked Bandit

Gary Cormier
(Originally published in Sullivan County Audubon Society’s “Warblings”)

It was a cool sunny morning in late April when I first arrived at the scene of the crime in the rocky hills of Jeffersonville, New York. I came out of retirement after being contacted by the Chickadee family, who reported that pounds of sunflower seeds were stolen during the night. There was little evidence to work from, no paw prints, scratches or other evidence. The method of operation was clear. The bandit was able to access the new penguin shaped metal bird feeder, hanging from the birch tree in the front yard. Removing it from the branch where it hung from a chain, the perpetrator was strong enough to drag the feeder several feet and remove the very tight metal top. There were no claw marks or damage and I immediately eliminated our usual suspect, Mr. Black Bear. All of the seeds were gone.

I knew I was dealing with a sophisticated and experienced perp, so I turned on the motion sensor near the driveway and placed the feeder back in its original spot, hoping to apprehend the suspect during the early hours of the morning. The very next day I examined the area. To my surprise the perp had returned and completely avoided setting off the motion sensor during the night. Instead of removing the penguin feeder, the perp was able to climb the pole of the wooden feeder and flip the top back, pulling the nails away, and accessing the sunflower seeds. I carefully examined the feeder with my magnifying glass.

But, again, no evidence was left behind, and the M.O. was different from the usual black bear, who was known to break the wooden feeder post and rip the feeder apart, leaving claw marks and damaging the nearby shrubs.

As an experienced investigator, I began developing a profile. Based on what we knew, I estimated the perp to be between 24 and 36 inches tall, weighing about 20 pounds, and very athletic. He definitely knew his way around the woods, and most likely lived in the neighborhood. There were no witnesses. Everyone I spoke with said they were sleeping and didn’t hear anything. With the canny ability to circumvent the motion sensor and slink through the dark of night, I knew we were dealing with a pro!

A few days past and nothing was disturbed. The perp must have known we were watching and had a hideout. “Maybe there was a lookout or accomplice”, I thought. Then, about two days later, we got the break we were looking for. I was awaken by my partner Melinda at about 6:00 AM. Melinda was on surveillance and spotted something moving near the penguin feeder. I quickly got my Nikon camera and watched from the bay window. We had the perp red-handed. I fired off several shots from the Nikon so we had the proof.

I wasn’t surprised to learn that our perp was none other than Mr. Rocky Raccoon.
WAA Opening Reception for Basha Kill Exhibition

WAA President Brent Lyons addressing Opening Reception audience. See page 5.

Perusing WAA works. All photos by Patricio Robayo

Renewing membership at BKAA’s informational table.
Secrets of the D&H Canal

A Towpath Walk with Gary Keeton

Fred Feibusch

On Saturday, August 5, I joined Gary Keeton and five other canal enthusiasts for a northbound walk along the towpath, starting from the DEC access road at Westbrookville. I’ve been a seasonal bungalow resident of Spring Glen for the last 28 years and from the start, I was intrigued by the ubiquitous ruins of the Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Canal, mostly focusing my rambles in Phillipsport and Summitville. I’ve visited several of the local canal museums, read a few canal history books, built a model of the Roebling Delaware Aqueduct for my daughter’s school project (she helped a little) and have always delighted in informing people new to the area about this amazing historic artifact that lies hidden in plain sight, 118 years after it became defunct.

But questions about the canal remained unanswered for me. How could a 108 mile canal, with 108 locks and 12 aqueducts, be constructed in only 3 years despite so many engineering challenges and without the use of modern excavating equipment? What was the impact of canal construction and operation on local villages and hamlets? What was life like for those who worked on canal boats? What was the environmental and human impact of this 19th century engineering achievement that traversed so many miles of rugged and scenic landscape, over several rivers from Honesdale, PA to Kingston, NY?

Gary addressed all of our groups’ questions and more while confidently walking backwards on the towpath. While the title of “naturalist” is the one he goes by, he is self-taught in archeology, geology, natural and social history, and probably a few other disciplines of which I am not aware. His weaving of diverse strands of information as we strolled is the result of his and others research, much of it from primary sources and oral history. While Gary’s knowledge is academically and scientifically grounded, his engaging storytelling style brought the canal to life as we studied the remnants of rock walls, the trees now growing in the canal bed, and the steep embankment supporting the towpath above the adjacent Bashakill.

Did you know that, despite 108 locks, there is a 17 mile stretch that is level enough to be lock-free? Did you know that the speed in which the canal was initially built was as much a result of the mobilization of local farmers and their equipment as it was of immigrant laborers? Did you know that to prevent leakage, the canal bottom was lined with clay which necessitated towing the boats rather than poling? Did you know that defying logic, engineers managed to construct the berme that supports the towpath, parallel to the Bashakill, from unstable sandy soil that remains intact today? Did you know that local residents and canal boat crews had a mutually beneficial, but often contentious relationship? Did you know that children who led the mules, pulling the boats (horses couldn’t be used because they would drink the fetid canal water), were often recruited from orphanages and many did not survive the harsh conditions of the journey? These and many other complexities of canal life were colorfully revealed during this amazing stroll through history.

I look forward to future canal excursions, readings and more secrets revealed. Thank you, Gary and BKAA, for enhancing my knowledge and appreciation of the wonders of the D&H.

Natural History Walk with Jack Austin - June 17, 2017

Jack Austin

Three members of the BKAA, who had carefully marked their calendars, attended this early, summer morning walk. We hiked slowly along the railroad trail, sharing observations, questions, and knowledge. The diversity of plants caught our attention, resulting in our comparing different trees, vines, and flowers, noting irises, horsetails, blueberry bushes, and sassafras roots. Insect life included butterflies, dragon and damsel flies. Bird songs were less common as temperatures rose, yet we heard 4 different woodpeckers calling nearby, as well as thrushes and warblers. Turtle egg shells were strewn about the nesting mounds, dug up by hungry raccoons or skunks. A stop at an observation tower provided a grand view toward the north, involving great blue herons being chased by redwings protecting their nesting sites. After 2 hours, we agreed that the time was well-spent, since it combined learning with fun.
Seeing an Old Friend for the First Time

John F. Lyons

It was a little after 8:00 pm when I turned off Route 209 onto Haven Road. I knew I was close to my destination, because the woman speaking for my GPS program told me so. A thunderstorm had just moved past, and drops of rain still dotted my windshield. The air smelled fresh and clear, but banks of mist lingered, hovering like ghosts above stretches of the landscape.

I could feel excitement building. I was about to enter the Basha Kill marsh. Although I hadn’t yet arrived, it was an area that I nevertheless knew well. I knew its shape, its geography and topography. I understood its importance and knew about its waters and the habitat it hosted. I understood its connection to the watersheds in the Catskill and Shawangunk mountains which rise up along its sides. And maybe better than most, I knew about the threats it faced from overzealous development in its surrounding environment. I knew these things because, for the last five years, I have helped in the fight to protect the Basha Kill as an environmental lawyer representing the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA). And yet, in those five years, I had never actually laid eyes on the marsh itself. So to me, the Basha Kill seemed like an old friend, one I knew well, but one I’d never met in person.

Well, tonight, the two old friends were destined to finally meet face-to-face. Tonight I was headed to the banks of the Basha Kill, my kayak hanging out of the back of my pickup, to join a group led by the BKAA’s Mike Medley and Scott Graber for a moonlit night-time paddle.

My first sight of the Basha Kill, when Haven Road emerged from the woods and opened onto the marsh, is ingrained in my memory. It stretched out as far as my eye could see to the north and south, a sprawling, lush, green expanse capped in places by floating banks of mist. A stirring sight.

Despite a few rain showers, participants experienced hands-on encounters with the wildlife, starting with a very young fawn temporarily left near a vernal pool, a red-backed salamander living under a stone, and a bullfrog peeking through the thick aquatic vegetation. We spotted several stinkpot turtles as we continued along Haven Road. Bill was able to capture and release one turtle for us to study.

We returned to the landing at about 10:30 pm. It was clear from the chatter as everyone broke down and loaded up their gear, that we had all loved our adventure. Many members of the group, me included, sought out Mike and Scott to convey their thanks and praise.

For me, the trip made me whole. It also made me prouder than ever of the BKAA and the leadership role it has taken in protecting this unique and special place. Standing there with mud in my wet shoes, I knew that the maps, photos and data that I’d known for years had just brilliantly come alive for me in a new way. I now knew my old friend’s face. And it was a wonderful sight.

Herp Walk

Gary Cormier

A group of fifteen participated in the Sunday, June 4, 2017 ‘Herp Walk,’ with local Biologist/Herpetologist William Cutler II. Everyone met at the Haven Road parking area where Bill gave an introduction to Herpetology, followed by a guided walk through the wetlands. Herpetology is the study of frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, snakes, lizards, and turtles. All enjoyed listening to Bill’s descriptions of the various species living at the Basha Kill, and the interaction between animal and plant life within the wetland ecosystem.

Despite a few rain showers, participants experienced hands-on encounters with the wildlife, starting with a very young fawn temporarily left near a vernal pool, a red-backed salamander living under a stone, and a bullfrog peeking through the thick aquatic vegetation. We spotted several stinkpot turtles as we continued along Haven Road. Bill was able to capture and release one turtle for us to study.

The last leg of the outing brought us down “stop-sign road,” where the group examined remains of several snapping turtle nests dug up by predators.

The event was an educational and entertaining experience. Bill Cutler has been described as a “walking encyclopedia,” and those who haven’t been on this trip should mark their calendar for next year.
One dozen garden club members met on the Basha causeway, Haven Road, on a clear Saturday morning. So much to see that all the group had to do was walk from the parking area to the bridge and back before traveling over at noon to the eagle watch across from the vineyard.

Marty pointed out the extent of the marsh with the Gunks to the East and the Catskills to the West and asked us to imagine over 1 mile of ice overhead which formed the Basha and its underlying gravel bed. We examined the dominant meadow-like growth of the arrow arum and the air spaces that support and allow aquatic insects to live underwater by securing their oxygen directly from the arum stems.

The usual, often intertwined, roadside vines of 3 leaflet poison ivy and 5 leaflet Virginia creeper were noted. Due to the heavy spring rains, the water level was high and we observed very black American Toad tadpoles which were destined to be short-lived. Alan K. Lewis, one of Marty’s Field Natural History students from the 70’s, most skillfully secured a snapping turtle which permitted examination of its small plastron, a couple of leeches, and its general personality before releasing it.

The few birds seen included red-wings, kingbirds and swallows. It was mentioned that the male red-winged blackbird returns early in the Spring and that the females arrive later. Before the arrival of the females, the males select and protect what is called a breeding territory. All females are invited in and males are chased out. If the male selects and protects a good territory he may have several mates; a poor territory and he may have none. The male does his advertising by displaying his bright red shoulder patch to keep males out, but it is his territory that truly attracts the female. The kingbird and the swallows are both insect feeding birds that hunt on the wing. The kingbird usually shoots out from a perch whereas the swallows hunt on the wing. We detected dragonflies that feed in a somewhat similar manner where they make a basket of 4 of their 6 legs and net insects while in flight and chew them up when still in the air.

There were several grasses and sedges; the difference between the groups is that the grasses had a round stem whereas the sedges have stems with edges that do not permit rolling them between your fingers. Another large grass was Phragmites which is considered by some to be an exotic. Exotics are not native or endemic and some exotics may become invasive as is true of garlic mustard and Japanese honeysuckle. We discussed the emerald ash borer and the inevitable demise of our ash species as this beetle is rapidly spreading and killing trees across the state by its larvae which eat the cambium or tree growth layer.

We adjourned to the South Road boat launch across from the Bashakill Vineyard, where Karen Miller (another of Marty’s students from the 70s), representing BKAA Nature Watch, was there to explain its mission and show off the active eagle nest with its fledging exercising eaglets.

On Saturday, June 10, eleven members of the Middletown Garden Lovers’ Club enjoyed a guided tour of the WMA led by naturalist Marty Borko. This educational experience included numerous sightings of birds, and reptiles with an incredible overview of local trees, wildflowers, natural grasses, and other plants. Mr. Borko’s expertise regarding this spectacular wetland’s flora and fauna was outstanding. Notable was Mr. Borko’s knowledge of the ecological balance necessary to sustain life within the wetlands and how BKAA volunteers, along with the DEC, help to accomplish that end. What an incredible place to encounter such breathtakingly beautiful and unspoiled habitat, and to think it is right in our own backyard waiting for all to appreciate, respect and savor.
BKAA Educational Outings

Moonlight kayaking. See page 13. *Photo by Susan Erny*

Remains of canal wall. *Photo by Fred Feibusch*

Gary Keeton and pileated woodpecker holes. See page 12. *Photo by Fred Feibusch*

Broken turtle shells seen on Natural History Walk. See page 12. *Photo by Jack Austin*

Natural History ramble. *Photo by Frank Coviello*
More Educational Events

Moonlight outing. Photo by John F. Lyons

Spatter dock or yellow water lily pads floating and surrounding a cluster of Basha’s dominant herb arrow arum. See page 14.

Bill Cutler describes stinkpot turtle’s anatomy. See page 13.

Marty Borko pointing out the compound leaves of the white ash which is threatened across NYS by the emerald ash beetle.

Bill addressing herps participants. Photos by Gary Cormier
2017 BKAA Campers’ Stories

(President’s Note: For the first time in a while, all our campers attended Camp DeBruce in the Catskills. While there, they encountered adventures that enhanced their self-confidence and environmental awareness. Here are their stories. Photos on page 19.)

Colleen Crosby

I went to the New York DEC Camp DeBruce in Livingston Manor, NY for the third week of their eight weekly sessions and I met a lot of new people with new personalities. The experience was amazing because we did so many cool and fun activities like making dream catchers, tie-dying t-shirts, collecting natural items for crafts and going on long hikes. When I left camp I had a new perspective of wildlife and nature in general.

All the counselors, volunteers, and other campers were so nice and helped us learn new things. I was the only camper from New Jersey. (Most were from NY State.) The counselors were well trained in how to deal with kids and were very enthusiastic all the time. We were taught to build tents and some of us went fishing and swimming.

At camp we sang songs and played many fun new games like zap and oh deer. We got to sleep outside and make skits for the other campers. I won an award for being an outstanding camper.

My biggest concern before leaving was that I would be homesick and miss my brother and sister and the cat. But, we were so busy everyday from when we woke up till when we slept in the cabins that I never was homesick. The food was really good too.

I am very thankful for the Basha Kill Area Association for sponsoring my week at camp. I do not think my Mom could have convinced me to go if she had to pay full price.

Elizabeth Lopez

Wow! NYSDEC camps are amazing! I went to Camp DeBruce and it was the best summer camp I have ever been to! I was a little homesick being away from home for a whole week since this was my first time going to a sleepaway camp, but the activities at camp kept my mind off it for the whole week. Also since I became a vegetarian last March, I was a little concerned about what my choices of food would be, but all my worries turned out to be for nothing. The food was better than any vegetarian restaurant food I’ve ever had! I thought I might be a little bored with no electronics, but trust me when I say...there was no time to be bored! Here are the highlights of my week at Camp DeBruce.

Day 1: After signing in and unpacking, we played a game to get to know each other. Then, we did a tour, where our cabin counselor told us about camp safety and showed us around the property. We played a pre-food (circle up) game which was really fun and then we ate lasagna! The vegetarian option tasted so good. After we ate we sat on one of the counselors read us a quote and asked us to think about and explain it. Then, we went to the fire pit and the counselors did many skits and “repeat after me” and “do as I do” songs. The skits and songs were my favorite part of the day. When the fire went out, we all sang a few final songs and went to our cabins to sleep. Before we went to sleep, our cabin counselor told us about “Rose, Thorn, Bud. We went around the cabin saying our rose (our favorite part of the day), our thorn (our least favorite part of the day), and finally our bud (what we are looking forward to tomorrow). It was a great way to end the day.

Day 2: When we woke up, (7am) we got ready really quickly and did morning activities. For morning activities we had our choice of birding, fly fishing, or nature pump, which is really just a nice way to say exercising. Next we did circle up games and ate breakfast. Breakfast was french toast and cereal. After breakfast, we went into our adventure groups which were groups to learn and explore with. In our adventure groups, we played trust games that were really fun. Then we explored the forest and went to a waterfall. Then Jimmy, our counselor for our adventure groups, showed us a plant that stings you, called stinging nettle and another plant that heals the itchy sting, called orange jewel weed. Then, all the adventure groups met up and did a “town hall,” where the issue was placing a ski lodge on camp property. In the end, we voted against the lodge. I’m glad we all decided to vote against the lodge because it would have caused the destruction of many plants and animal habitats. For dinner we had spaghetti and then decorated cabin logs to represent our cabins. Later we watched a movie about nature that was very interesting.

Then we went back to our cabins and slept.

Day 3: The day of the overnight! When we first woke, we did morning activities and then went with our adventure groups to a field where we did interactive learning activities. For breakfast we ate “sausage” sandwiches. Who knew vegetarian meat could taste so real? Then we packed for the overnight. Before we left for the overnight we ate pizza for lunch. We got to choose the place where we wanted to have our overnight and I chose Frick Pond. We spent the night outside of our cabins; my group slept in the woods! That was really cool! After we unpacked our tents and laid our sleeping bags out, we worked on a skit making fun of the counselors (counselors’ orders). It was really fun. I was assigned the part of a narrator. We ate dinner out of foil...
Day 4: We woke up and didn’t do our usual morning activities since we were still at the overnight. For breakfast we had granola bars and bagels. Then we hiked to Mongaup which was really far! It had a beach and campground. A couple of friends and I swam and made sand castles. We ate lunch there, which was cheese sandwiches. Then we drove back to camp. I liked hiking there, but I was glad we got to drive back. When we got back, we unpacked and ate dinner, which was nachos, one of my favorites! Then we decorated our logs again and we played games in the field until dark. When it was dark we were asked to charge into our darkest colored clothes to play a very interesting and fun game called “Zap”! Maybe you’ll get to play if you attend this camp! Then we went back to the cabins to sleep. I was exhausted!

Day 5: Today when I woke up, I was very tired. For morning activities today, Kaitlyn and I did birding. We saw two woodpeckers and a mourning dove. Then we ate pancakes and vegetarian sausage for breakfast. Then we got to choose where we wanted to go again. I went back to Mongaup with one of my friends from my cabin. My friend and I played card games alone for a while, but then others joined in. We ate cheese sandwiches again for lunch and went back to the camp after hanging out for a while. I took a shower and we practiced our skits. Then we had closing campfire where we performed our skits and sang a bunch of songs. Singing with everyone as a group was one of my favorite things to do at camp. Then we went back to our cabins to sleep.

Day 6: I woke up today and decided to sleep in instead of doing morning activities since it was the last day of camp. We played circle up games, and then ate breakfast which was blueberry waffles, vegetarian sausage, and cereal. Then we did a final adventure with our adventure groups. My group went to the fish hatchery. There were so many fish! We also made bracelets that represented the E.C.D.C.I.C.A.C. I can’t tell you what the letters stand for. You’ll have to come to camp and find out for yourself during a camp lesson like I did! Later we did circle up games and played camp Olympic games. Camp Olympics were a version of the Olympics for camp where each cabin competes in a series of challenges that you will find out about when you get to camp. My cabin (Beaverkill) actually won the Olympics! Then we started packing our things in our cabins and went to play a few games before we went home. Then we had a closing ceremony where we got certificates for going to camp and did some more work on our s’mores while waiting for our s’mores to cook. We ate the s’mores and then got to go on a night hike. On the night hike we used all of our senses besides sight. No light was allowed. After the hike, we turned in for the night and slept in our tents.

Kaitlyn Ponte
Before I went to Camp DeBruce I wasn’t sure what to expect because I have never been to a sleep-away camp before, but when I got there I had an amazing experience! Once my friend, Elizabeth, and I got settled in we started playing games with the other counselors and campers to get to know each other a little bit. Before each meal we have circle up, which is basically a game we play while the kitchen staff and volunteers are setting up. At camp there were Camp Olympics. This was a series of competitions between each cabin. You could earn points if you have no food waste, your counselor won their challenge, you have the cleanest cabin, you participate in morning activities, your cabin has lots of spirit, someone from your cabin wins the circle-up game, and if your cabin comes in first, second, or third place in the Olympic Games on the last day of camp.

On the second day of camp, the campers were split up in our adventure groups after breakfast. On the adventure, your group goes to different parts of the camp and learns about the environment. My favorite adventure was when we went to the forest. There, we learned what a tree cookie was and even made our own on a piece of paper. When we finished those, we played a game called camouflage.

On Tuesday afternoon, each overnight group left for their overnight. On my overnight group, it was girls only. Elizabeth and I got to have a tent to ourselves because we brought a tent from home. When we got there everyone set up their tents and collected firewood. Once we were finished, all of us started on our skit for the closing campfire. I think our skit was pretty funny. Throughout the camp week the counselors put on skits for us that were pretty funny so, for our final campfire, each overnight group got to put on a skit for them. We got to make fun of the counselors, directors, and kitchen staff. While we were coming up with our skit, the three staff members that were with us (Lacey, Brandi, and Chrissie) were heating our dinners over the fire. The next morning we hiked about 2 1/2 miles to Mongaup Pond where we got to go swimming, play volleyball, go fishing, do T-traps, and go canoeing. I
spent the day swimming with Elizabeth and Abby. The food we ate each day was delicious! Most days when we ate outside, we got to sit wherever we wanted. On those days I always sat with Liz, Hailey, Rachel, Ryan, Sam, and Maggie. Before each meal, we sang a fun song! We were also given the hopper, which is the person who has to take all the dishes to the front table at the end. Then we were asked the V.I.P. question to see which table got to get food first. Finally, we got to sit down.

On the last day of camp we found out which cabin won the Camp Olympics and it turned out to be my cabin!!! We were all so happy! My cabin had six girls, Hailey, Elizabeth, Sam, Rachel, CeCe, and Me, one counselor, Brandi, and one volunteer, Christine. On the last day when the parents had all shown up, we had an award ceremony and sang a song for the parents. Thanks for allowing me to have this wonderful experience and I hope I can have it again next year!

Lukas Redzimski
Dear Basha Kill Association,
Thank you for sending me to Camp DeBruce, because at camp I got to be away from my parents for a change. It was week 4 and the weather was nice. My brother got to go with me to camp, and we were in the same cabin.

At camp I learned about Hunter Safety, which took all day. At Hunter Safety we got to shoot 22’s, which is something you normally wouldn’t do at a camp. We also learned how to follow an animal’s blood trail, which is useful if you want to go hunting. After we spent the entire day learning and reviewing we had to take a test, and surprisingly everyone passed.

At camp we also got to go on an overnight, which is basically camping out. There were different overnights you could choose, and I chose Fly-Fishing. I got to play fun games like manhunt, and when it got dark, we went on a hike in the pitch black with no lights. After all the fun I got to sleep in a lean-to shelter with all my friends. When we woke up we went back to camp, and had breakfast and took showers. Then we took the camp van to the Fly-Fishing Museum where we learned how to tie flies. After we were done, we took the van to a fly fishing club. There we learned how to cast and then we’re able to finally fish and sadly no one caught anything.

In conclusion, I learned tons of things about the environment at Camp DeBruce, had lots of fun, made new friends, and got to eat yummy food.

Skyler Redzimski
Dear Basha Kill Area Association,
Thank you for giving me a chance at having a wonderful experience at Camp DeBruce! It truly made my summer! I learned a lot of interesting things, such as caring for the environment, and being a good camper in general, but that’s only the tip of the iceberg. I would like to share with you my full camp experience, and all the adventures we had there!

On the first day, I was nervous about making new friends, but I soon realized that some of these people had a lot of things in common with me, and we became good friends for the rest of camp. The first day was kind of crazy, because we were only there for not even half a day, but managed to play a bunch of Rec games and sing by the camp fire. That’s the end of the first day. On the second day, we got our adventure groups (groups you spend time with throughout the week doing projects and games together.) Also, we started packing for our camping trip, and I was picked to do the fly fishing overnight with my brother and other campers. That was the end of the second day. On the morning of the third day, we did our daily morning routine of eating breakfast and playing Rec games, but after lunch, we left to go with our camping groups to where we slept in the woods. I would personally say that my group was pretty lucky, because if something bad happened, such as if a wild animal attacked or it started to rain, the camp was five minutes away. Plus, the boys got to snooze in a lean-to shelter, unlike the girls and counselors, who had to sleep in hammocks and tents. I would say that the overnight was my favorite part of camp, because we played fun games in the woods and did hike in the dark. That was the end of the third day. On the fourth day, our counselors from the overnight took us to a fly fishing museum, where we learned how to tie flies for the hook. After that, they took us to a local fly fishing club, where the people there told us how to use the fishing rod. Then they let us fish on our own, but, no one caught anything. We headed back to Camp DeBruce, where all the other groups were waiting. When it got dark, we played a game called Zap, which is my second favorite memory from camp. We went to sleep in our cabins, and that was the end of the fourth day. On the night of the fifth day, our cabin did a skit in front of the whole camp. On the sixth and last day, everyone was sad about leaving, but we left and that was the end of camp.

Once again, I thank you Basha Kill for giving me this wonderful experience of eating delicious food, making new friends, and having a jolly good time.

Maria Shestakov
This summer I got a scholarship to DeBruce Camp. While the time there was short, I definitely loved it. I had many fun experiences at camp that I otherwise would not be able to have had considering where I live - New York City. I loved
camp because of the warm atmosphere and the way staff makes learning fun.

Everybody at camp was really nice and friendly. They made sure we had the time to get to know each other better; I quickly made new friends with my cabin mates. Another nice thing they did at camp was making sure that we were always doing great. At the end of the day the counselors asked for a number between 1 and 10, 1 being the worst day ever and 10 being the best. Not only this, but after all the hard work that the counselors did, they were always kind and supportive.

Everyone knows that summer break is supposed to be relaxing and easy. This camp makes sure this stays true! Even though the camp is an educational camp they make learning fun. For instance, we once played a game called: “Oh, Dear!” It is a fun and active game that teaches you about the population of deer and how it goes up and down due to diseases, hunters and humans. We also learned about “macro invertebrates” by looking for them in a creek; we had to look carefully in the water for them, even under rocks where they like to hide. At the end of the week, we went to the fish hatchery, where we learned about raising fish. This was a fun experience that was educational but finished off the week perfectly.

In conclusion, the experience at camp was fun and I would love to go there again next year, maybe even for 2 weeks. I would like to thank the BKAA for sponsoring me and giving me this opportunity to go to camp!

Taylor Vero

Camp DeBruce was an exciting adventure for me! During the registration process I started to get a little nervous, but that feeling was quickly squashed when I met a girl in my cabin, Big Indian, who shared the same name as my best friend. She introduced herself and we immediately hit it off! I loved all the girls in Big Indian. We played lots of fun games, but I most enjoyed Sardines and Oh Dear. On the first night we had a huge campfire and sang lots of songs. I really enjoyed the overnight where we hiked to Beaver Pond. We had to pack a hiking backpack with everything we would need to sleep out next to a pond. We hiked up to our destination, set up camp, had a lesson identifying pond life, went for a hike, cooked our dinner over a fire, and slept under the stars. My favorite lesson was tree leaf identification. We pressed the leaves and then grouped them by family. Then we would take the leaf around the camp to identify the tree it belonged to. I also loved doing the hiking trails.

I enjoyed the camp counselors very much. I missed home at some points and they were very helpful and comforting. I loved receiving mail from my family and friends and writing to them about my experiences. I would definitely love to go to this camp again, but this time with a friend! Thank you BKAA for this amazing opportunity!
2017 BKAA Campers

Colleen Crosby

Kaitlyn Ponte

Maria Shestakov

Taylor Vero

Elizabeth Lopez

Lukas Redzimski

Skyler Redzimski
Mamakating’s First Poets Laureate: Susan & Stephen Erny - No Better Choice

Jackie Broder

A lovely crowd gathered on the evening of Tuesday, July 11th for Mamakating’s Town Board workshop. But this was no ordinary workshop. Tonight, most attendees were there for a different reason, to enjoy a performance by the town’s First Honorary Poets Laureate - Susan and Stephen Erny!

Having a town poet laureate was the brainchild of Councilwoman Christine Saward and Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Chair Andrew Weil. Upon hearing the call, the Ernys sprang into action, and from the looks of their application, there was no better choice!

Both Susan and Steve’s parents nurtured their children’s love and respect for nature at an early age. In fact, Steve remembers admiring our beautiful valley on his many trips to his father’s summer home in Narrowsburg. This love found an outlet in poetry for Susan and song for Steve. In fact, Susan started writing poetry at age 8, when her third grade teacher recognized and encouraged her talent. Her parents’ reading of children’s poetry and hymns at church further encouraged her. Susan’s love of words never left. She eventually became an elementary school teacher and librarian, retiring from the Monroe-Woodbury School District in 2013. She also plays guitar and sings.

Steve is a true artist. Not only has he been writing and singing since age 16, he is a woodworker by trade who also paints, sculpts, draws, and plays the banjo and guitar. Steve was introduced to the Bashakill in 1985 and quickly fell in love. Shortly thereafter, he and his true love bought a house right next door and haven’t left since.

Susan and Steve are very active in their community and joined the BKAA when developers began threatening their paradise. As most know, Susan spent 12 years serving our board. It was my pleasure to serve with her. In fact, she wrote an introductory article about me when I first joined, so it is an honor to return the favor. As a fellow board member, Susan was always very passionate and strong in her beliefs, yet expressed herself in a very graceful and eloquent way. I still miss her presence to this day.

Steve helped me fumble through my initial days of water testing, frustrating and ever-so-comical times! The Erny’s show up at every clean-up, muck boots and gloves at the ready and you can usually see one or both patrolling Haven Road. Their love of the Bashakill is real! They’ve even graced us with some poignant songs about the wetland and our illustrious leader!

As Mamakating’s Poets Laureate, their responsibilities include performing at town events and promoting poetry appreciation for young and old alike. They wasted no time fulfilling their duties. On July 11, Susan recited one of her poems written about Mamakating (see attachment), enhanced by a beautiful powerpoint with accompaniment by Steve on the banjo. Susan and Steve then performed one of Steve’s original songs about the Bashakill. Afterwards, they announced their first project. Steve created a wooden tree to be hung in the Mamakating Library. Paper leaves will be left nearby for some impromptu poetry writing, the first poem written by his niece and read at town hall.

So, congratulations to Susan and Steve Erny, Mamakating’s first Poets Laureate, no better choice!

Animal life at the Bashakill is not limited to birds. In fact, the diversity of habitats — and therefore species — is what makes the Bashakill special. There are over 30 species of fish here, including the rare blue-spotted sunfish and the ironcolor shiner, a NYS species of special concern. The marsh, with its slow-moving channel, is warm with low oxygen levels, thus home to species such as bowfin and bass. But several tributaries and cold springs support trout as well. Want to know more? Go to thebashkill.org
A PLACE CALLED MAMAKATING
By Susan Emry

You ask of Mamakating?
Come here
Sit and listen
And I will tell you
Of this place, my home

Foremost is the beauty!
Morning fog lifts late each day
Then, the sun crests
The Shawangunk Mountains to the east
Revealing a valley so verdant
You’d swear it was covered in moss
Catskill hills rise to the west
Thick with forests
Over which the sun sets
In colors that take your breath away

Now behold this valley!
The jewel of Mamakating:
The Bashakill Wetland
Lush!
Teeming, brimming, overflowing with life
Arrowleaf, cattails, water lilies, bladderworts
Spread in spring to cover the water’s surface
Forming a floating carpet of Greenness
White clouds caught between the lily pads

Ducks, geese, herons, eagles
Flock here- to this pristine place-
As do beavers, bear and deer
Red efts dot the trails on damp days
Countless creatures dwell in this sanctuary
It beckons adventurers and dreamers
The presence of its precious inhabitants
Commands its protection

But step back with me
Take a look
At Mamakating’s past

In the 19th century
Men dug the S & H canal
With picks, shovels, and sweat
108 miles through our valley
From the Delaware River to the Hudson
To carry coal—fuel of the future
To New York City
To heat homes, to power new industry
For seventy long years
With commerce came prosperity
And promise
To our corner of the world
Criscrossing railroads followed
Bringing tourists, new residents
To our picturesque Town
Blasting through the mountains
Down into the valley and up the other side
To Summitville and beyond
Blowing their whistles
Throwing coal dust
Chugging through the landscape

Though the trains and canal boats
Pass through Mamakating no more
We are blessed now
To have the paths they laid
To walk upon
In tranquil reflection

Finest of all—
The real heart of Mamakating
Is the People
Knit together by a love for this place
Where respect and integrity are sovereign
A solace
All proud to call it
Our Home
Invasive Species Are An Environmental Problem That Affects Us All
Invasive Species Awareness Week Lecture

Leah Rudge

July 9-15 was New York State Invasive Species Awareness Week. Consequently, numerous state agencies and other land managers organized events to spread the word about invasive species that week. As a member of the Student Conservation Association and Americorps, I was already hosting a talk on invasives through my internship at the Sam’s Point Area of Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Since I volunteer with the BKAA’s Nature Watch and am a South Road resident, I felt it was also important to present a lecture closer to home. Therefore, in partnership with the BKAA and the Mamakating Library, I spoke on July 12. A crowd of 16 very engaged audience participants joined me for a 1.5 hour talk on the most common invasive species of Sullivan County.

As someone who has worked at various parks for roughly the past four years, I know how different governmental land managers labor on removing and controlling invasive species, because I am typically the one doing the work! However, to truly succeed, we need private landowners to understand the importance of eliminating invasives. If a park totally clears its land of invasives, spending a lot of time and money doing so, but its next door neighbor doesn’t know or care, then the species will creep back into the landscape. For instance, on my drive into work, I see vegetation I have attempted to remove invading sides of the road bordering my park, and wonder, “Is all I am doing worth it?”

July 12th’s audience reminded me that it IS worth it, because people DO care about our world. Many questions arose about controlling the species we discussed and many answers came from members of the crowd who also had experience or knowledge of invasives! The top ten most reported invasives in Sullivan County were, in no particular order, Japanese Barberry, Japanese Stiltgrass, Japanese Knotweed, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Water Chestnut, Mugwort, Multiflora Rose, Garlic Mustard, Common Reed (Phragmites), and Purple Loosestrife (New York iMap Invasives).

If you would like to help the BKAA, partnering with NYS DEC to remove Japanese Barberry, please contact Kim Ashley at info@thebashakill.org. She will lead a pilot project to eradicate barberry from the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area. Japanese Barberry (my nemesis) is a prickly invasive that ticks love! Not only does it dominate the landscape by outcompeting native plants, it is a magnet for ticks who enjoy the temperature regulation and cover the barberry plant provides. Do you really need any more reasons to help us?

Hudsonia’s Best Management Practices (BMP) fact sheets are available on the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) website for these non-native invasive plant species.

Norway Maple (Acer platanoides)
Tree-of-heaven (Ailanthus altissimma)
Garlic-mustard (Allaria petiolata)
Japanese barberry (Berberis thunbergii)
Oriental bittersweet (Celastrus orbiculatus)
Black Swallowwort (Cynanchum louseae)
Glossy buckthorn (Frangula alnus)
Bell’s honeysuckle (Lonicera x bella)
Purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria)
Stiltgrass (Microstegium vimineum)
Mile-a-minut (Persicaria perfoliata)
Common reed (Phragmites australis)
Knotweed (Polygonum cuspidate and P. x bohemia)
Multiflora rose (Rosa Multiflora)
Water-chestnut (Trapa natans)
On the ever expanding outskirts of Guayaquil, Ecuador, resides one of the world’s last remaining Dry Tropical Forests, Cerro Blanco. Dry Tropical Forests are unique ecosystems, with only two seasons, very dry, and very wet. Because the plants and animals that live there have adapted to survive both long periods of rain and drought, Dry Tropical Forests are among some of the most biodiverse habitats on earth. Cerro Blanco itself contains an astonishing number of rare, endangered, and endemic species - one out of every five plant species found there exists nowhere else on earth. With well over 700 plant species, 54 mammals ranging from howler monkeys and jaguars to 21 species of bats, and 221 species of birds, the ecosystem is overflowing with complex interactions and remarkable biodiversity. The air there is fresh and clean. Cool breezes blow, and the trees shut out the din and pollution of the city. Some call it “The Lung of Guayaquil”.

Tragically, due to logging, urban sprawl and short-sighted farming practices, 99% of Dry Tropical Forests in Ecuador are gone, forever. Without protection, this form of rainforest could disappear within my lifetime.

Looking to our own country, similar decimation due to lack of foresight has made wetland ecosystems, such as the Basha Kill, rare and fragile jewels out of formerly common, but exceedingly important landscapes. Cerro Blanco, covering 60 square kilometers, is protected by Ecuadorian law as a “Protected Forest”, but such laws must be enforced, and with limited resources and no shortage of threats, defending this reserve is a tall order. Guayaquil’s population has burgeoned tenfold over the past 60 years to nearly two million residents, primarily from a continuous influx of migrant workers in search of job opportunities. These migrants, unable to find affordable housing within the city, have expanded its borders, and colonies of ramshackle huts are bleeding into the outskirts of the Cerro Blanco reserve. An even greater threat comes from illegal loggers and poachers.

The line of defence is a thin one - Nine rangers patrol the preserve in small groups, listening for the sounds of gunshots and chainsaws, following the noise and arresting the perpetrators. It’s difficult to hear well or move quickly through kilometers of thick trees and foliage, and the loggers and poachers, determined, armed and dangerous, pose just as much of a risk to the brave rangers as to the trees and animals. According to the head ranger, Eleuterio P. Y. de la Cruz, as soon as the rangers begin to walk back home away from their posts, or to a new area, loggers enter the forest and start cutting. And as for the hunters “…they are armed, and we don’t carry guns”.

This task might be impossible if not for an ingenious new innovation - Rainforest Connection. Invented by Topher White, a prominent software engineer from San Francisco turned jungle-defending environmentalist, Rainforest Connection is an artificial intelligence listening device, made from the recycled scraps of locally-sourced modern technology; old smartphones, scraps of solar panels and other bits and pieces (essentially, junk rescued from Ecuador’s landfills). Mounted high in the treetops where sound travels better, the “Guardian Device”, a flower-shaped solar panel array about the size of a dinner plate, powers a small but sensitive microphone, placed at the center.

Higher up on the tree, and hundreds of feet out of reach of potential tampering, is a box containing an old mobile phone, which records and relays sound to an antenna. Using the local cellular network, which is strong thanks to the nearby city, everything the mic hears is relayed through that antenna to modern smartphones in the ranger’s pockets, making them ring loudly as though the ranger just received a call. A special artificial intelligence app on each ranger’s phone identifies the sound (chainsaw, gunshot, etc) and pinpoints the source on a map, the same way a GPS pinpoints your current location and destination. This eliminates the guesswork that makes the rangers job’s difficult and dangerous, allowing them to head directly to the location of a disturbance and know what to expect when
Saving Cerro Blanco continued from page 25
they arrive on the scene.

When loggers or poachers are caught, their saws and weapons are confiscated, and they can face jail sentences or fines to the tune of $250,000. The confiscated equipment can then be used to “train” the app, by having the phone “listen” to the sound the contraband makes and then giving the program “hints” as to what it is. After repeated trials, the app has “learned” the sound. The complete system can pick up sound over three square kilometers, far more than a human could hope to hear.

But Rainforest Connection is more than a tool for law enforcement; it can also be used as preventative medicine. The critically endangered Great Green Macaw, the beautiful animalian symbol of Guayaquil, Cerro Blanco, and one of the rarest birds in existence, breeds in the reserve’s Valley of the Pejios, and the noisy squawks of its babies are another sound the app can be trained to hear. The birds, already reduced to perhaps ten individuals, are a prime target for illegal animal exporters, so when Rainforest Connection hears macaws (or other key species) in the park, it alerts the rangers, who can post a guard at the nest and ensure the young grow up safe & sound, helping the species to recover. By the same system, the location and number of a species can be tracked and monitored without extensive and costly censuses. Every time a jaguar roars, monkey howls or bird sings, Rainforest Connection is there to hear it.

In addition to the ten Guardian Devices in Cerro Blanco, Rainforest Connection is being utilized and proving highly effective in Cameroon and Sumatra and, because of the common nature of its parts and simple design, it can be used anywhere, even our own Basha Kill Wetlands. In a time when budget cuts have forced environmental protection on a national scale to the wayside, simple, inexpensive systems such as these are priceless assets to protecting nature’s wild places and, with the power of wireless communication, even the most remote jungle can have environmental guardians listening in. It’s true junk genius.

Rainforest Connection uses upcycled mobile technology to monitor and protect remote forests, enabling real-time interventions.

"IF A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST..."

“... and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?

These days, statistically speaking, when a tree falls in the forest, there’s usually somebody there to hear it — the people that cut it down. With Rainforest Connection technology, we can finally rewrite this ancient adage to read:

“If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is there to hear it, you still can. And so can the world. We’re developing multi-tiered platforms for remote sensing of ecological data that can be used to monitor the health of forests and endangered species.”
Hope Farm - A Partnership between SUNY Sullivan and New Hope Community

Kathryn Scullion — (Originally published in Sullivan County Audubon Society’s “Warblings”)

Gardens and farms on college campuses vary considerably in size, purpose, and management. They may be integral to an agricultural curriculum, or they may exist for the main purpose of supplying food to the campus community. Some are managed by faculty and staff in an academic division, and some are run by a farm manager, or by students themselves. SUNY Sullivan took a different approach. We created a farm through a unique partnership between our small community college and New Hope Community, a neighboring organization that supports developmentally disabled adults.

SUNY Sullivan is located on 405 beautiful acres of former farmland in the Catskills. In 2009, our Honors Program students initiated the formation of a community garden. With the assistance of volunteers, donations, and grants, we fenced a quarter acre and built 28 raised beds that are rented each year to students, faculty, staff, and community members. For years, we wanted to produce more food on campus, but lacked the funding to hire a farmer and purchase equipment. In Spring 2015, members of the Science and Culinary Departments approached the administration with the idea of forming a partnership with an outside entity. Our President suggested New Hope as a possibility. We met with representatives from New Hope and they were extremely enthusiastic. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with them on the Winter Solstice, and in April 2016 we began fencing in 3 acres adjacent to the Community Garden.

Per our agreement, SUNY Sullivan is providing the land, fencing, and a secure place to store equipment. New Hope is supplying the Farm Manager, support staff, equipment, seeds and plants. Volunteers from both organizations showed up on weekends in April and May 2016 to install more than 200 fence posts. SUNY Sullivan was able to secure grants for a 26’ by 72’ high tunnel (a greenhouse that is usually unheated where plants are grown directly in the ground) that is shared by the college and New Hope. The farm is managed using organic and permaculture techniques. Food produced on the farm is primarily distributed to the residents at New Hope and the college’s Culinary Program, and some is donated to local food banks. As production increases, we plan to make more available to the college community through the cafeteria and a market or CSA.

The college does not yet have an agricultural curriculum or courses in sustainable farming. However, we thought that a farm was an important addition to our sustainability initiatives (including geothermal heating and cooling, a 2MW solar array, a demonstration wind turbine and solar array, and composting). In the first year it has been in operation, we have invited faculty from all divisions to tour the farm and do farm-related class projects. It has worked amazingly well. We are introducing sustainable agriculture to students who might never have set foot on a farm, not just those who would have chosen to take a farming class. Classes that have visited the farm so far include: Introduction to Green Building (students helped install the plastic on the high tunnel), Environmental Science (visited once and helped harvest another time), Photography, Microbiology (collected soil samples for DNA analysis), Restaurant Operations, Honors Program Seminar, and several sections of Freshman Seminar (one class helped harvest beans, one planted berry bushes, and one collected food waste from the Culinary Program to compost).

Residents from New Hope also work on the farm. There are wide, wood-chipped paths for wheel chair accessibility. Individuals help with planting, weeding, harvesting, and caring for chickens. We believe that our students and New Hope residents will mutually benefit from interacting on the farm.

In its first year, the farm has already exceeded our expectations for production, beauty, and interest generated. The college’s “backyard” is now an active, vibrant, inspiring place.
The Basha in the magic light of dusk. *Photo by Bill Lucas*

Mamakating's Poets Laureate: Stephen and Susan Erny. See page 22. *Photo by Jackie Broder*

2017 Basha Kill fledgling eagles (left) and red wing blackbird harassing Basha Kill adult eagle (right) - 7/2/17. *Photos by Justin Schmidt*
The Columbia Hill Neighborhood Alliance (CHNA) is a grassroots organization formed by a group of concerned neighbors in the summer of 2012 after first learning of plans for an extremely large multi-family development, Gan Eden, on the site of the former Columbia Hotel (210 acres, 197 in Thompson and 13 in Fallsburg) on a steep hill outside Hurleyville, NY. A site plan and supporting documents, calling for 885 units were submitted to the Town of Thompson in 2007 shortly after two separate zoning changes, allowing for greater density (RR1 to SR) on this property, were enacted by the Thompson Town Board virtually unnoticed by the public.

Through our lobbying efforts, and with the help of town Councilman Richard Sush, the allowed density for multi-family dwellings in SR zones was rolled back to pre-2005 levels in a Local Law enacted in November 2012. In July 2017, developers presented a draft planning report to the Town of Thompson alleging this action was arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable but it’s not clear what their next step will be.

Since forming, CHNA has held two well attended public informational meetings in 2012 and 2013 as well as staging two “What the Hill” festivals in Hurleyville in 2015 & 2016. Our ubiquitous blue and white “What the Hill is going on?” road signs have definitely been noticed and well received in the local community. We’ve also conducted successful mass mailings, door hanger campaigns and petition drives. Additionally, we have had interviews on WJFF, WVOS, and Cable Channel 6 to promote our activities.

This spring, we produced a powerful brochure concerning the potential for a water crisis if Gan Eden is approved and built. There were on site and off site well tests conducted by developers last October (2016) that resulted in documented negative impacts to surrounding private wells. The Town of Thompson has already assumed control of other local projects at the expense of taxpayers (Emerald Green, Harris Woods, Melody Lake, and Dillon Farms) for failed water and/or sewer systems. We fear the same outcome for Gan Eden’s water and sewer infrastructure. Your neighborhood could be next.

A significant ongoing concern is with how the Town of Thompson determines water usage for such a large undertaking. According to their website, the NYS Dept. of Health (DOH) plainly allows for either per bedroom or occupancy as the basis for water usage calculations, but the Thompson Planning Board (and other Towns in the area) is opting for the per bedroom calculation standard, 110 gallons per day per bedroom for moderate use. However, the DOH additionally states that this number does not account for extra water needed for homes with high occupancy, lawn irrigation, spas, tubs, and other activities. The developers’ most recent appearance, as of this article’s writing, before the Thompson Town Planning Board was at the end of July 2016 when they presented new maps and site plans calling for 535 units (147 attached townhouse units and 385 garden apartment units) to be constructed on their 134 buildable acres.

Developers maintain all units will be 2 or 3 bedrooms but this doesn’t match the reality of other similar projects built locally that typically have 4-5 bedrooms per unit. The DOH per bedroom calculation for this venture amounts to almost 150,000 gallons per day water usage and an equivalent amount of treated waste water being discharged daily. However, we feel water estimates should be based on occupancy levels that consider current population trends in some groups and that this calculation falls well short of what the actual amount will be.

Other water related issues contested by our group include storm water runoff and the discharge of treated wastewater into the East Branch of the Mongaup River (a class B trout stream). Developers’ experts claim that use of retention ponds and vegetated swales will reduce amount of runoff from the current level by 10% despite miles of new paved roads, 1,162 parking spaces, building roofs and other impermeable surfaces that will cover the now empty site. Then there’s the question of how long their onsite “package” waste water treatment plant will operate without problems. These systems are designed to operate on a required year round steady volume, not a peak 3 month period and 9 months of relative inactivity. There is also a problem with them failing over time due to lack of ongoing proper maintenance.

Another concern, is increased local traffic stemming from Gan Eden, exacerbated by planned creation of two additional entrances at particularly treacherous sites, one on a steep hill and the other on a blind corner.
Our third annual “What the Hill” festival, to be held on Sunday, 8/27/2017 11AM-4PM, promises to be as successful and well received as the first two, with live music, food and merchandise vendors, a bounce house and a variety of environmental information booths (including BKAA). CHNA thanks Perry Gips and Party Master, The Hurleyville Fire Department, Mike Schapiro and Snow H Productions, the Center for Discovery, MobileMedic and all our neighbors who have supported our efforts over the past 5 years.

CHNA has been operating under the auspices of Catskill Mountainkeeper, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, for the past several years and appreciates its support in allowing our use of its tax-free status and knowledge/advocacy of environmental issues. Group members still regularly attend Town and Planning Board meetings in Thompson and Fallsburg to advocate for sensible right sized development and adherence to existing codes.

CHNA members meet on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 6PM in the Hurleyville Firehouse and welcome anyone who is interested in participating in our efforts or who just wants to know more about the environmental and safety issues associated with Gan Eden.

You can obtain more information about our group and view our latest brochure and other material at our website, www.columbishill.org, or visit us on Facebook.

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**TELL A FRIEND ABOUT THE BASHA KILL AREA ASSOCIATION!**

Have your friends fill out this coupon for membership or more information:

P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790

Yes, I’m interested in the environment and wish to become a member of BKAA. Enclosed is:

_____ $10.00 for individual membership  _____ Other Donation  _____ Please send more information

Name ____________________________________________ Phone ____________________________

Address __________________________________________ Email ____________________________ (for action alerts)
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (Committee) Accepts Draft Comprehensive Plan (Plan)

*Paula Medley*

On July 31, following two public hearings and eighteen months’ work, the Committee unanimously accepted the Plan and recommended it to the Town Board, which will conduct another hearing, complete the required environmental review, and propose any changes before considering Plan adoption.

The Committee’s recommendations stated the following:

“The Steering Committee, working with the Town of Mamakating’s professional planning consultants, embarked on a three-phase public outreach effort comprised of:

- Identification of strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats in a Town-wide visioning workshop meeting;
- Gathering of public perception and feedback concerning proposed development strategies in a charrette focusing on the Town’s four Village/Hamlet Centers;
- Online submissions and suggestions to the Town’s website;

The Committee heard and considered comments from the public relating to the Comprehensive Plan and these comments focused on issues relating to the achieving of the balance of population density that would create sustainable development and opportunities within the Town while preserving the rural character of the community, promoting and encouraging tourism and ecotourism in the area, and protecting the Town’s unique environmental features such as the Bashakill and Shawangunk Ridge.

The Committee fully considered all comments, concerns, and recommendations and discussed them with its planning consultant, and the Committee believes that the Comprehensive Plan to be recommended to the Town Board strikes a reasonable balance between the need to promote appropriate and sustainable residential and business development while preserving the rural community character, natural resources, and historical heritage.”

Also on July 31, newly appointed poet laureate, Susan Erny, read an original poem celebrating the Plan and Vision (see accompanying poem).

Earlier, on July 20, Sullivan County’s Legislature honored Committee members for advancing the first town wide hydrogeological study to be accomplished in county history. Probable adoption of the 2017 Plan will generate another critical effort, amending current zoning to accurately reflect the revised Plan. This will be an arduous, but necessary, task if residents’ Vision for Mamakating is to achieve fruition.

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**Ode to Mamakating’s Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee”**

*Susan & Stephen Erny  
Mamakating Poets Laureate*

What a masterful plan for our Town has been made  
Eighteen months of their time fifteen citizens gave  
To create this document, these folks were not passive  
So much to consider-it was an effort massive  
Aquifers, land use, environment, and trails  
Eco-tourism, history, protecting hills and dales  
To focus on what was most highly esteemed  
Design charrette meetings were convened  
This gave the community a chance to reflect  
On what mattered most- out of respect  
Good plans consider the needs of a population  
To match the vision and provide a just evaluation  
This committee labored with insight and wisdom  
With much thought for our generations to come  
We honor you for this masterful document  
And thank you  
For your amazing,  
Remarkable,  
Wonderful,  
Incredible,  
Staggering,  
Astounding,  
Noble  
COMMITMENT!
Though TEC has not appeared before Thompson’s planning board (board) since April 12, this project has generated activity on several fronts.

Notably, developers withdrew construction plans for a 100,000 sq. ft. caretaker/security facility on their Fallsburg acreage, undoubtedly influenced by BKAA and other’s outcries. But…now they propose a large 1 family residence on this same parcel. In his July 21 letter to Fallsburg Code Enforcement Officer Mollie Messenger, BKAA Consulting Attorney John Lyons strongly urged Fallsburg’s denial of permits or approvals related to this building. Lyons stated that Fallsburg’s property will be a “gateway” into TEC’s complex, not just the site of a 1 family house. As such, improper segmentation occurs if Fallsburg grants a building permit before State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) compliance. Nor does the 1 family structure qualify as a REC-1 house since its lot coverage (building footprint, driveway, other impervious surfaces) far exceeds the 10% lot coverage allowed in REC-1 zoning districts (See Lyons communication to Messenger, especially map denoting TEC access road and planned residence).

Also, after considerable delay, the board sent a Notice of Intent to be Lead Agency for TEC’s environmental review to all involved (having permitting authority) and interested (no permitting power) agencies. Importantly, the Town of Mamakating, BKAA, Yankee Lake Preservation Association, and Wolf Lake have been named interested agencies, meaning they will be officially apprised of all crucial TEC benchmarks (public hearing dates, etc.). While DEC declined assuming lead, agency Environmental Analyst Joseph Murray underscored DEC’s prominent part in TEC’s project review. Murray asserted, “As an involved agency, the Department will play an active role throughout the SEQR process with staff providing comments with respect to scoping and the review of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).” Furthermore, Murray advised the board to prohibit additional well-drilling/road building until a new wetlands delineation is completed. Hallelujah! The BKAA and partners have long advocated for this re-validation. Other TEC matters to be examined by DEC entail:

- Protection of waters
- Protection of on-site wetlands like Harlen Swamp
- State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Wastewater Concerns
- Water withdrawal
- Stormwater
- Effects on Energy Resources

(See Murray’s Remarks on TEC’s Renewal Application)

Meanwhile, the FBI continues investigating TEC CEO Sherry Li’s business dealings. Li has received heightened scrutiny due to a recent front page article in USA Today, targeting her enormous financial contributions to the President. Hey! You never know what will “blow” this ridiculously inappropriate scheme “out of the water” and away from here.

As always, rest assured that the BKAA remains on TEC’s case.

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**John Lyons TEC Letter to Fallsburg**

**July 21, 2017**

Ms. Mollie Messenger,
Code Enforcement Officer
Town of Fallsburg
5250 Main Street
South Fallsburg, NY 12779

Re: Thompson Education Center (TEC)

Subj: TEC Development of Renner Road Parcel & Access Road onto Renner Road

Location: Renner Road, Tax Parcel No. 65.-1-11.59

Dear Ms. Messenger:

Grant & Lyons, LLP is a law firm dedicated to the practice of environmental, land use and real estate law. We represent the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA).

**Summary: Building Permit for Single-Family Residence Should be Denied**

In the near future, the Thompson Education Center (TEC) may apply to you for a building permit to build a “single-family residence” on a parcel of land owned by TEC on Renner Road in Fallsburg (Tax Parcel No. 65.-1-11.59) (the “Renner Road parcel”). In that event, we urge you to deny that application. The reasons in support of this position are set forth below.
JOHN LYONS continued from page 32

**Explanation: Reasons in Support of Building Permit Denial**

1. Development of TEC's Renner Road parcel with a single-family home, when that same parcel is also proposed to contain the TEC educational complex access road, constitutes improper segmentation.

A building permit for a "single-family residence" on TEC's Renner Road parcel must be denied because that parcel is undisputably a critical part of TEC's proposed educational complex (the "project") proposed for its abutting land in the Town of Thompson (Tax Parcel No. 26.-1-6). Allowing any development on TEC's Renner Road parcel before completion of the SEQRA review of the proposed educational complex would be improper segmentation.

Since its inception, TEC has planned to utilize its Renner Road property as part of the project. In a letter dated April 29, 2014 to the Thompson Planning Board, Sherry Li said that the Renner Road property will be used as an "exit road" for the project. And this remains the case. According to the latest version of the site plan (Revised June 20, 2017), an access road will be built on the Renner Road parcel which will connect vehicular traffic from the complex to Renner Road. TEC's plan to use the Renner Road parcel for an access road is also stated twice in TEC's Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) dated June of 2017, where TEC says:

Thompson Education Center (TEC) is to be a school of higher education located on an approximately 573 acre parcel off of Wild Turnpike in the Town of Thompson (s/b/l 26.-1-6) and in the Town of Fallsburg (s/b/l 65.-1-11.59), Sullivan County, New York ... [emphasis added].

Thus, TEC's Renner Road parcel will play a critical role in the project by providing a traffic outlet from the project onto Renner Road. Because this parcel is an integral part of the project, a building permit cannot be issued for a single-family residence on this parcel.

SEQRA's rule against improper segmentation ensures that the lead agency will examine the potential adverse environmental impacts of an entire project, viewing it as a whole. That whole view makes sure that projects don't evade full environmental review by being built piecemeal. Just as important, it also ensures the existence of a full range of flexibility for project design changes that accomplish mitigation to the "maximum extent practicable" as required by SEQRA. Diminishing that flexibility will constrain the range of alternatives, and hence constrain mitigation.

To illustrate this, on the next page is an excerpt from the June 20, 2017 site plan map showing TEC's Renner Road parcel and the proposed access road which traverses it.

As lead agency, the Thompson Planning Board will have to look at potential adverse environmental impacts presented by this project, and SEQRA requires that alternative designs be considered as possible means of mitigating adverse impacts. The site plan maps show that TEC's Renner Road parcel is already very restricted. Federal wetlands occupy much of the middle of the parcel. Moreover, TEC proposes to build the access road right on the property line. The proposed access road raises numerous questions about potential adverse environmental impacts:

- How will the paved access road affect water quality and wildlife in the wetland?
- How will the access road, smashed up against the property line, affect neighboring parcels?
- How will the routing of significant volumes of traffic onto Renner Road affect safety and the condition of Renner Road?
- Is the access road on the Renner Road parcel wide enough to handle all the traffic that will be generated by the huge TEC educational complex?
- If it has to be wider, how does that affect its location on the Renner Road parcel?
- Would there still be room left for a structure?

These are all questions which will have to be examined by the Thompson Planning Board as it conducts its environmental review of the project. Part of that review may involve the consideration of design alternatives that will do a better job of mitigating impacts. For example, possible design alternatives might be: changing the access road location; changing its configuration; or changing its dimensions. But the range of these design alternatives is a function of the available space on the parcel.

Importantly, TEC's Renner Road parcel is already very limited. It is covered by a large area of federal wetland. It is also restricted by its narrow, rectangular shape. Standing alone, these reduce the range of alternatives. Developing a single-family residence on the Renner Road parcel, before the SEQRA review is completed, will further constrain the parcel and materially diminish the range of design alternatives available down to the point of almost eliminating them.

To conduct a proper environmental review of the proposed...
use of this parcel for an access road for the TEC project, the parcel must be left undeveloped until the SEQRA review is completed. Further constraining this parcel will adversely and materially affect the effectiveness of the SEQRA review.

For a fuller discussion of the rule against improper segmentation, especially as it applied to this project, please see my previous letter dated May 8, 2017 to Steven Vegilante, Town Supervisor for the Town of Fallsburg. A copy of that letter is attached for your convenience.

2. **Proposed single-family home may exceed allowed maximum lot coverage.**

In addition to the SEQRA argument, there is an argument for denial of a single-family home building permit based on the Town of Fallsburg Zoning Law. See the next page for an excerpt from Page 1 of the Bulk Regulation table from the Town of Fallsburg Zoning Law.

TEC’s Renner Road property is located in the Recreation REC-1 Zoning District. According to a note on the Town’s bulk regulations table, the bulk regulations are designed to help achieve the purpose of the various zoning districts. The table states that the purpose of the REC-1 District is:

To conserve open space by encouraging a very low density development pattern while permitting clustering at higher densities, provided that central water and sewer service is provided and common open space provided.
In order to achieve that end, the bulk table states that the maximum lot coverage in this District for a lot developed with a single-family home is ten percent (10%).

We do not have the benefit of an original, scaled version of the site plan map. But it appears to the eye that the lot coverage presented by the proposed structure, driveway, and the access far exceeds ten percent (10%) of the lot area. We urge you to scrutinize and calculate the area of lot coverage proposed. If it exceeds ten percent (10%), an application for a building permit which is based on the building and driveway dimensions shown on the TEC site plan must be denied for failure to comply with the Zoning Law.

**Conclusion**

The rule against improper segmentation prohibits the Town of Fallsburg from approving or issuing building permits for any development on TEC’s Renner Road parcel as it is clear it is included as part of TEC’s proposed educational complex. Allowing partial development of the parcel will improperly constrain the environmental review and narrow the range of potential design alternatives to mitigate potential adverse impacts, or perhaps eliminate them completely.

What’s more, it appears as if the single-family residence structure and driveway/access road on the Renner Road parcel may far exceed the maximum lot coverage allowed in Fallsburg’s REC-1 Zoning District for a parcel developed with a single-family home.

For these reasons, we urge denial of any application by TEC for a building permit to construct a single-family home on its Renner Road parcel.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very truly yours,

Grant & Lyons, LLP

John F. Lyons
Initial DEC Comments on TEC’s Revised Application

July 21, 2017

Lou Kiefer, Chair
Town of Thompson Planning Board
4052 Route 24
Monticello, New York 12701

Re: SEQR LEAD AGENCY DESIGNATION
Thompson Education Center
(formerly known as China City of America)
Town of Thompson, Sullivan County
DEC NO. 3-4846-00440100002

Dear Mr. Kiefer:

This is in response to your notice (prepared by Delaware Engineering, D.P.C.; dated June 23, 2017) requesting that the Town of Thompson Planning Board be re-established as SEQR Lead Agency for the above noted project. From the information provided, it is apparent that the proposed Thompson Education Center (formerly known as China City of America) was the subject of a previous SEQR review in which the Town Board of the Town of Thompson, serving as SEQR lead agency, issued a Positive Declaration (dated November 13, 2014) and circulated a draft Scoping Document in preparation of the drafting of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address the identified significant environmental impacts posed by the project. (Editor’s Note: Thompson’s planning board was lead agency, not the town board.)

The Department has no objection to the Town of Thompson Planning Board assuming lead agency status for the continuation of the environmental review of this project under SEQR. As such, it will be the responsibility of the Town of Thompson Planning Board to determine the need for any subsequent SEQR compliance (i.e. Positive Declaration, Scoping Document, EIS, etc.).

As an involved agency, the Department will play an active role throughout the SEQR process with staff providing comments with respect to scoping and the review of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). Based upon our preliminary review of the circulated documents, this office has identified the following environmental concerns to be addressed and discussed further as part of the SEQR process:

1. **Protection of Waters** - Please note that the tributary of Primrose Brook [Water Index # D-1-12-25-1-2] has a class and standard of C, according to 6NYCRR Part 815, Item 72. Therefore any physical alteration to its bed or banks will not require a Department permit.

If a permit is not required, please note, however, that the project sponsor is still responsible for ensuring that work shall not pollute any stream or waterbody. Care shall be taken to stabilize any disturbed areas promptly after construction, and all necessary precautions shall be taken to prevent contamination of the stream or waterbody by silt, sediment, fuels, solvents, lubricants, or any other pollutant associated with the project.

2. **Freshwater Wetlands** - This site contains New-York State regulated wetlands; specifically, Freshwater Wetland WO-42 (Class II), Freshwater Wetland WO-43 (Class III), and Freshwater Wetland WO-54 (Class II). A Freshwater Wetlands Permit pursuant to Article 24 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law will be required by this office for any physical disturbance within the wetland boundary or within the regulated 100 foot adjacent area.

Please be aware that previous validations of the wetland boundaries at this site by the Department have expired and should no longer be used as the basis for the environmental review to be conducted under the SEQR process. Therefore, to facilitate the environmental review under SEQR and the DEC permitting process, please have the project sponsor contact Michael Fraatz, Region 3 Bureau of Habitat (tel: 845-256-3057), regarding the re-validation of the wetland boundaries.

The applicant will be required by the DEC to demonstrate that the project meets the permit issuance standards contained in the Freshwater Wetland Permit Requirements Regulation, 6 NYCCR Part 663.5, available online at: http://www.dec.ny.gov/regs/2485.html.

**Test Well Drilling and Temporary Access Road Construction:** A Freshwater Wetlands Permit, pursuant to Article 24 of New York State Conservation Law, is required for any physical disturbance to any New York State-regulated wetland or the 100-foot adjacent area of a state-regulated wetland. If TEC proposes to disturb any such state-regulated wetland, or the 100-foot adjacent area, it is required to submit a permit application to this office. A permit is not required by TEC for work “in close proximity” to state-regulated freshwater wetlands if there will be no physical disturbance to the wetland or adjacent area associated with the proposed activities.

As noted above, the wetland boundary needs to be re-validated by the Department to determine the location of the proposed test well and temporary access roads in relation to the DEC regulated area, and to determine the need to obtain a Freshwater Wetlands Permit.

**Harlen Swamp Wetland Complex:** As identified in the 2016 New York State Open Space Plan, the state mapped and regulated wetlands found on site make up the “Harlen Swamp Wetland Complex” and provide important habitat for a variety of wetland species. Therefore, the project sponsor should evaluate how the proposed development will fit within the landscape of the “Harlen Swamp Wetland Complex”. The DEIS should include a discussion of how fragmentation of habitat and the disruption of wildlife movement will be avoided or minimized within the project area. Potential wildlife corridors should be identified and discussed in the context of how the proposed project will...
maintain links between the large wetland habitat patches.

3. SPDES Wastewater - In accordance with the New York State Environmental Conservation Law, a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Permit is required for a facility whose treated wastewater discharge to groundwater is greater than 1000 gallons per day, and for all discharges to surface water.

The proposed method of wastewater treatment for the project must be described. If an on-site wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is proposed for treatment of effluent generated onsite, the DEIS should include an analysis of the capacity of that WWTP. Impacts to the water quality of the wastewater receiving stream should be evaluated due to increased flows from the project to this treatment plant. The routing of connector sewer lines to this facility should be disclosed and potential impacts due to construction also evaluated.

If the proposed project is to connect to an existing public wastewater facility, an engineering report must be prepared to confirm the capacity of that facility to serve the proposed project. Approval of plans for any proposed sewer extensions or facility expansions will be required from DEC.

4. Water Withdrawal - Please note that the project sponsor must receive approval from the Delaware River Basin Commission prior to commencing or undertaking the construction of a water withdrawal system within the Delaware River Basin. Water withdrawals that receive an approval from the Delaware River Basin Commission are exempt from obtaining a water withdrawal permit from the Department, pursuant to 6 NYCRR Part 601.9(b) - Water Withdrawal Permitting, Reporting, and Registration. However, Delaware River Basin Commission approved water withdrawals must submit an annual water withdrawal report to the Department [see 6 NYCRR Part 601.5].

The DEIS should discuss potential impacts with respect to proposed water withdrawals. The project sponsor must determine what geologic formations from which proposed wells will withdraw water from, quantify the anticipated productivity of the formations, and discuss whether any potential impacts due to well interference are anticipated. The project sponsor should evaluate potential impacts to existing users of the formations in which the proposed wells will withdraw water and discuss any potential impacts from diverting water or wastewater from the Lower Hudson River Watershed to the Delaware River Watershed. The DEIS should provide a list of these existing users and provide approximate distances between each identified user and the proposed new wells. In addition, potential impacts to onsite wetlands and streams due to well water withdrawals must also be evaluated.

The DEIS should provide a breakdown of flows per NYSDEC Design Standards (1988). Average Daily Demand must be provided for the number of housing units, number of bedrooms, dormitory units, student classroom buildings, recreational facilities, parks, community center units, library, museum and sport center, etc. For groundwater supplies, the project must meet Maximum Daily Demand with the largest well out of service. Maximum Daily Demand is twice the Average Daily Demand.

5. SPDES Stormwater (Construction) - Since project activities will disturb over 1 acre of land, the project sponsor must obtain coverage under the current SPDES General Permit (GP-0-15-002) for Stormwater Discharge from Construction Activities, and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be developed which conforms to requirements of the General Permit. For information on stormwater and the general permits, see the DEC website at http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/43133.html#Permit. Authorization for coverage under the SPDES General Permit is not granted until the Department issues any other necessary DEC permits.

The increased emphasis on a holistic approach to resource protection, water quality treatment, flow volume control, maintenance cost reduction, and the dynamics of stormwater science has led to several changes in State regulations regarding stormwater management. The New York State 2015 Stormwater Management Design Manual provides a general overview on how to size, design, select, and locate stormwater management practices. This manual is available at: http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/29072.html. This latest edition of the Design Manual is intended to address runoff reduction through the process of site planning to preserve natural features and reduce impervious surfaces by applying green infrastructure techniques.

The DEIS should discuss the required stormwater management planning process and steps for maintaining preconstruction natural hydrologic conditions of the site by application of environmentally-sound development principles as outlined in the Design Manual.

6. Effects on Energy Resources - The project sponsor should include an analysis of all measures appropriate to reduce energy demands associated with the redevelopment of the site. This section should provide a description of the effect of the proposed action on the short and long term use and conservation of energy resources; methods to reduce inefficient or unnecessary consumption of energy during construction and long term operation; and a discussion of applicable building codes. Design elements suggested by the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program should be evaluated for potential incorporation in the project design.

The project sponsor should also include an analysis of greenhouse gas emissions that will result from development of the project. The Department’s document, Guide for Assessing Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Environmental Impact Statements [available
Paradise II Development on South Road Changing From Summer Resort to Summer Camp For Adolescent Boys - Update

Paula Medley
Since Congregation Chasidei Belz Beth Malka did not receive mandated permits in time from Mamakating, DEC, and Department of Health they did not open a camp at Paradise II this summer.

However, on June 27, Mamakating’s planning board (board) unanimously passed several motions, clearly indicating their endorsement of the camp’s special use permit and site plan applications.

First, the board adopted a Negative Declaration under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) for Paradise II’s special use permit and site plan.

Next, the board granted special use permit/site plan approvals for Paradise II applications conditioned upon a Resolution being reviewed by the board at their next meeting. The Resolution would include a condition relating to issuance of DEC’s State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit and a mechanism for board examination and monitoring of the project’s wastewater processes.

This contemplated Resolution would additionally encompass a condition involving camp inspection by a town designated fire inspector, who would advise of any reasonable safety measures to be instituted. Also entailed would be setting a date for activating lighting, so the board could recommend necessary modifications due to off-site glare or safety needs. Further, was determining a date for water and sewer turn-ons to ensure a timely Health Department inspection, where the board was likewise to be “kept in the loop.” Lastly, two Town Code conditions imposed on camp special use permits (buildings and activity areas 200 ft. from property lines and a 30 ft. distance between structures with sleeping quarters) would be waived.

The BKAA strongly opposes these waivers, believing they will compromise campers’ safety and also create a negative precedent sought by future developers.

Notably, no Resolution was presented at the board’s July and August sessions, so it seems applicants will wait until closer to next summer’s camp opening to finalize obtaining requisite permits and approvals.

As always, the BKAA will carefully monitor pertinent Paradise II benchmarks and inform members of necessary intervention.

DEC COMMENTS continued from page 37
at: http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/56552.html, should be used to guide this analysis.

Thank you for providing this office with the opportunity to offer comments with regard to the continuing environmental review of the Thompson Education Center development proposal. As stated above, the Department will continue to play an active role throughout the SEQR process with staff participating in scoping and the subsequent review of the DEIS.

If you have any other questions or comments in regard to this letter, or your responsibilities under the New York State Environmental Conservation Law, please do not hesitate to contact me at 845-256-3040.

Sincerely,
Joseph R. Murray
Environmental Analyst
Division of Environmental Permits

cc: US Army Corp of Engineers, NY District
Delaware River Basin Commission
NY State Dept. of Health, Monticello Office
Sullivan Co. Div. of Planning & Environmental Mngmt.
Town of Thompson Town Board
Town of Fallsburg Town Board
Town of Mamakating Town Board
Delaware Engineering, D.P.C.
Thompson Education Center, LLC
M. Fraatz, DEC R3 Habitat

Dragon Springs (extrapolated from Susan Erny’s Friends of the Shawangunks article) / The BKAA and Deerpark Rural Alliance (DRA)

Paula Medley
Dragon Springs (DS) has added an eighth story atop its rehearsal space without a permit. A stop-work order was issued in September 2016, but the new story has not been demolished and DS is in litigation with Deerpark on this matter.

That eighth story raises concerns about fire safety. Some DS buildings apparently do not have certificates of occupancy. DS President Johnathon Li recently wrote to Deerpark terminating fire inspections at the site. One fire commissioner stated, “There is not an aerial truck in the tristate region that could reach a building of seven or eight stories”. DRA will demand fire inspections and request to see an approved fire emergency plan.

June 20th’s DRA sponsored Deerpark Conversation was a crucial beginning in galvanizing town-wide interest in resolving planning and zoning challenges currently besetting Deerpark, many engendered by DS. As Paula Medley was unable to deliver BKAA remarks then, Susan Erny, BKAA member and Friends of the Shawangunks board member, did so for her (See Medley’s BKAA comments). For more information about DRA activities, (See Grace Woodard’s summary).
In conclusion, the BKAA considers DRA to be our invaluable ally and therefore is committed to facilitating your winning efforts through our unfaltering support. Tonight, you have significantly expanded residents’ involvement. Keep building upon this momentum and you will change the course of your Town!

Thank you.

Deerpark Rural Alliance (DRA) Update

Grace Woodard

Deerpark Community Conversation: DRA’s first meeting to bring Deerpark citizens together in a town conversation yielded a turnout of 55 people from five of Deerpark’s seven hamlets (and from nearby towns) and was held on June 20th at the Deerpark Senior Center in Huguenot. This session produced a few takeaways. Deerpark folks respond when they sense there is a willingness to discuss town-wide issues in an arena outside of official town meetings, which have inherent limitations on participation and free exchange. A second take-away is that there are shared common concerns about development and problems in our rural communities.

The Community Conversation did not resolve or reconcile ongoing disagreements with the persistent Dragon Springs (DS) pattern of development (a tangled history/or concerns with the town), but it was a first step at communication, with many from DRA having direct contact with DS and local Falun Gong practitioners.

June 20th’s objective to establish non-confrontational communication was established. This gathering divided into hamlets to examine a variety of matters. Participants applied the community visioning template of SWOTS - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Solutions. Individual groups came up with common threads (affection for Deerpark’s rural way of life and worries regarding traffic, safety, mining, trash, water, and air pollution). For a first go-round, though not deep, responses were forthcoming, a start. The follow up has yielded new people, conversations, zoning discussions, different faces at town meetings, and a plan for small groups coming together to address issues we all share, can tackle, and focus upon. The Gazette, a Friday supplement of The Record, did a pretty good job of covering the meeting in its Friday, July 28th issue, which can be retrieved from recordonline.com.

DRA has been fairly quiet this summer, but attendance has continued at town meetings. The Planning Board has had a lot on its agenda recently, particularly plans for the New Century Film (a project on the former New Hope Farm) and a warehouse (online comic book business), both in Huguenot. The latter generated concern over segmentation because the warehouse is just a tiny studio’s future location in the Neversink River floodplain. Planning has focused on septic capacity which appears inadequate for the needs of a production studio. Once up and running, the studio can involve several hundred persons at any given time and quite possibly demand a waste water treatment plant, not just expansion of existing systems. The long form environmental review will be important here. Additionally, withdrawal of some dormitory plans and applicant’s apparent lack of clarity regarding project scope, suggest a long haul and some big hurdles for this commercial development. Citizens need to be alert for public hearing notices. This will be a real test for Deerpark Planning to be on top of New Century Film. Any questions or feedback? Email deerparkruralalliance17@gmail.com. Thank You!
SAVE THE DATE

45TH BKAA ANNUAL MEETING

Nora Brusinski and
Consulting Attorney John Lyons
2017 Honorees

“Journey Through the Bashakill,” Powerpoint
Presentation by Elly Knieriemen

Celebrate this year’s notable achievements and hear the latest updates at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 21, 2017 at Phillipsport Community Center, 657 Red Hill Road, Phillipsport, NY 12769 several miles north of Wurtsboro off Route 209. Registration commences at 9:30 am when dues may be paid, with only solvent members receiving a ballot. Light refreshments will be available then, also. Call to order occurs promptly at 10 am. Participants will be treated to a special powerpoint offering by photographer extraordinaire Elly Knieriemen. Additionally, there will be an informative, interactive discussion of 2016-2017 highlights, election of officers and board members, along with awards. As usual, the finale will be a drawing for intriguing door prizes (all donated). BKAA merchandise, like Bashakill field guides, John Haas birding publications, and sweatshirts, all $20 apiece will be available, also newly designed BKAA mugs for $25. See you there!

Questions? Contact Paula Medley directly at (845) 754-0743 or Email info@thebashakill.org.