38th Annual

Jackie & Lorry oversee luncheon

Keep Earth Clean - It Isn’t Uranus

BKAA CleanUp

All Photos by Kevin Kreischer

4 NYC Chapter Trout Unlimited board members with Riley, the Bash Kill’s resident corgi
MAILBAG: April 30, 2019

Dear Paula and BKAA,

I just wanted to let you know how very pleased I was to be able to participate again in the BKAA annual clean-up this past Saturday 4/27. It is impressive to know that there were about 80 people who volunteered that morning, the majority of whom walked the roads and trails surrounding the beloved Basha Kill Wetlands, and the others who drove their trucks, picking up the many filled garbage bags and larger objects like tires, lumber and old furniture. Such great satisfaction is gained in knowing that we have helped cleanse and protect the fragile wetlands ecosystems that we all cherish and enjoy!

Also, as you know, I often photocopy parts of the BKAA Guardian and Calendar of events, to share with friends who want to learn more about the Basha Kill Wetlands. It occurred to me recently, that to the unfamiliar reader, there is only a Mission Statement at the beginning of the newsletter, and I wanted to propose that you consider adding 2 brief summaries or paragraphs, and include them in every edition: a brief History of the Basha Kill, how it formed and how long it’s been around (such as Gary Keeton presents), with a note about its takeover by the DEC; and a brief History of the BKAA itself, when and why it was formed, some of the purposes and some of the issues it has tackled over the years, partnership with the DEC and role in education and stewardship, etc. Now that I’ve said all this, I’m sure that these statements already exist, perhaps even appearing in the Guardian, in which case I’m only suggesting that they be included in each issue for first-time readers.

With very best wishes,

Jack Austin

May 21, 2019

Dear Paula Medley and BKAA,

Thank you so much for taking care of the Basha Kill and your help with taking care of the Neversink River re: the DEIS for Dragon Springs. I live on the Neversink River in Godeffroy and I am truly thankful for your help in guiding the Deerpark Rural Alliance and for sending Andy Willingham to support us in keeping these rivers clean.

Kathleen Matthews,

Godeffroy

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

ECO's:  Officer Ricky Wood 845-665-5637 (cell)  
Officer Thomas Koepf 845-612-6099 (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
Summer 2019 New Members & Donors

**Summer 2019 New Members**

Hope Abrams — John Armistead — Ken Brasier — Mary Angela Buskey — Kathleen Colligan — Kathleen Darcy
Steve Duffy — Sean Duffie — Ann Finnerman — Edward Hindman — Royal Jay Holly — Virginia Hughes
David Kearford — Gregg Leslie — Marcia & John Monaco — Lynn Pagano — Carolie M. Scribner — Arleene Siegel
Kimberly Thompson — Mary Lou VanAken — Graham Vest

**Summer 2019 Donors**

In Memory of Frank Brusinski — Maryallison Farley
In Memory of Al Merritt and Bill Morris — Arlene Borko
In Honor of Karen C. Miller — Catskill Exotic Bird Club

Michael Abate — Alicemarie Borash — Jeffrey Broder — Mary Angela Buskey — Laura A. Coruzzi & Robert Schneider
Gregg Leslie — Monique Lipton — Kathleen A. Matthews — John Miller — Elizabeth C. Parker
Margaret Dryer Perkins — Eileen Phelan — E.M. Pilipski — Deanna J. Prisco — Charles Sajeva
Barbara Semonite — Arleene Siegel

**Haven Road Bridge Closure**

Effective 8:00 a.m. July 15, 2019

**Poetry Corner:**

**My Beloved Owl**

Sitting in his treetop he sees it all
And does not miss a thing; though his brain is small.
He listens quietly to the evening wind
And sees what I can’t see.
Far better than me because he is free.

Onward and upward my owl takes flight
Upon ethereal wings into the moonlit night.
My night wizard soars above the trees
And beyond the hill.
With quiet wings no one can hear, he lands upon my windowsill

Waiting patiently, my spirit guide moves to and fro;
Telling me softly all my trials are over and time for me to go.
He will take me beyond the moon far past the universe and beyond.
I feel my soul released as if by a magic wand.

Through the heavens following the spirits who have gone before;
Only taking with me my memories and unspeakable lore.

— Lee Scribner

**IN MEMORIAM**

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

**Alfred B. Merritt**

Deanna Prisco

Besides being a strong BKAA supporter, Deanna was extremely active with longstanding BKAA partner Orange County Land Trust, where she served as board President and in other critical capacities.

**Andree C. Sherman**

The BKAA sends heartfelt condolences to Yvonne and members’ family and friends.
2019 BKAA Calendar of Events

All activities free and open to the public!

Weekends from Saturday, April 13 through Sunday, June 23

Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch
Join trained BKAA Nature Watch Volunteers at the South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View the nesting bald eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, the volunteers will help you get to know the Basha Kill a little better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for some fun in the outdoors! From 10:00 am to 4:00 pm every Saturday and Sunday between April 13 and June 23. Call Kevin Keller at 845-434-6209 or Maryallison Farley at 845-888-0261 for more details.

Saturday, June 15, 8:30 pm
Moonlight Walk with Gary Keeton
Amble along Haven Road and the Railroad Trail. Enjoy moonrise over the ridge as you discuss the area’s natural history. Meet at the Haven Road DEC parking lot (on left coming from Route 209). Contact Gary at (845) 386-4892 for additional facts.

Saturday, June 22, 9 am
Natural History Walk with Jack Austin
Stroll 2-3 miles on level terrain with Basha Kill educator Jack Austin as you see and listen to what’s nesting, growing, and maturing. Bring binoculars, insect repellent, and wear good walking shoes. Meet at the Haven Road DEC parking lot (on left coming from Route 209). Visit to Mamakating’s new Environmental Center included. To register and/or for more information, contact Jack at cell # (845) 649-8720.

Saturday, July 6, 10 am
History of D&H Canal with Gary Keeton
Join Gary for a walk through time. Ever wonder about local stone walls and foundations? Curious about how people farmed the rocky soils or the relationship between the Basha Kill and Pine Kill? Oh, and learn about the canal, too! Meet at the DEC access road on Route 209 across from the Hometown Deli in Westbrookville. Bring binoculars. Contact Gary at (845) 386-4892 for particulars.

Saturday, August 3, 5:30 am
Sunrise Walk with Gary Keeton
Rise and shine! Enjoy the Basha Kill’s wonders from a different view. Bring binoculars. Meet at Haven Road DEC parking lot (on left coming from Route 209). Call Gary at (845) 386-4892 for information.

Sunday, August 11, 10 am
Reprise of History of the D&H Canal with Gary Keeton
Join Gary for a walk through time. Ever wonder about local stone walls and foundations? Curious about how people farmed the rocky soils or the relationship between the Basha Kill and Pine Kill? Oh, and learn about the canal, too! Meet at the DEC access road on Route 209 across from the Hometown Deli in Westbrookville. Bring binoculars. Contact Gary at (845) 386-4892 for particulars.

Saturday, September 28, 10 am
Canoe/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.

Friday, October 25, 7-9 pm
Free Public Star Watch by John Kocijanski of the Catskills Astronomy Club
Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch, across from Bashakill Vineyards. To register, call John at (845) 798-8087. For event updates, visit Catskills Astronomy Club’s Facebook page. Rain date the following day.

Saturday, October 26, 10 am
Hike the Shawangunk Ridge with a NY-NJ Trail Conference Trail Maintainer
Event co-sponsored with Trail Conference. 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 Paula at (845) 754-0743.

Sunday, November 3, 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.
Who We Are: The BKAA and Basha Kill

( Editor’s Note: Periodically, we will reprint this information from our brochure and field guide. See Jack Austin’s letter in Mailbag.)

The Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA)

Who we are:
We are a volunteer organization working to preserve the unspoiled quality of the beautiful and unique Basha Kill, as well as other nearby areas whose ecological health is interconnected with the Basha Kill.

As an official steward of the Basha Kill under the DEC’s Adopt-A-Natural-Resource program, we are authorized to conduct an annual cleanup, to collect water samples from sites throughout the Basha Kill drainage and to arrange and carry out on-site educational activities.

What we do:
We are a watchdog for the wetland.
We stay alert to threats such as pollution, vandalism, and unwise development to the Basha Kill watershed and surrounding area.

These advocacy efforts are clearly linked to our mission statement.

We work with other groups.
The BKAA collaborates with representatives of local government and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to address problems. We monitor meetings of the local Town Board and Planning Board to stay apprised of potential development problems. The BKAA partners with other environmental groups to safeguard the region’s valuable natural resources. Membership in such organizations enhances our influence in the broader environmental community and enables us to be more effective advocates.

We are an education group.
We offer free nature walks at the wetlands led by local experts. Call us at 845-754-0743 to arrange a program or nature walk for your group or class. We offer educational presentations at regional events. Each summer we sponsor campers to the DEC Environmental Camp in DeBruce. We produced a video on the history and importance of the wetlands, available for loan.

We are a hands-on organization.
We sponsor an annual cleanup where we roll up our sleeves and spend the morning collecting garbage and litter. We carried out a two year baseline, water quality monitoring project, and continue to monitor the status of the Basha Kill’s water quality. We sponsor a volunteer nature watch program. In this program, we educate visitors about animal and plant residents of the Basha Kill and we collect data about visitor use of the wetlands.

Basha Kill Wetlands

The Basha Kill Wetlands Today
The Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area, located on the border of Orange and Sullivan Counties near Wurtsboro, New York, consists of over 3,000 acres of wetlands and uplands which were acquired by New York State and administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), beginning in 1972, with funds from the 1972 Bond Act. It is the largest freshwater wetland in southeastern New York and is a unique unspoiled jewel situated in the Shawangunk Valley, only 65 miles from New York City.

The original plan for the Basha Kill was to provide breeding habitat for black and wood ducks, but the combination of fast-moving water in tributaries, slow-moving water in the channel and still waters on the edges of the marsh has created a range of habitats favorable to a splendid variety of plants and animals.

Who was Basha?
Legend has it that the name “Basha” referred to an Indian princess who drowned in the stream, but research has shown that it is probably a title denoting a leader or sachem (healer). “Kill” is the Dutch word for stream.

How the Wetlands Developed
About 16,000 years ago, glacial outwash from the Pine Kill formed an alluvial fan (or delta) that spread across the valley, blocking the flow of the Basha Kill. As the Basha Kill Creek was blocked off, it became a glacial lake which slowly filled with decaying aquatic vegetation over thousands of years.

Eventually, this lake evolved into a wetland, which included bog meadows, red maple swamps, and rushes and sedges. Early European settlers called this wetland “drowned land.” After the D&H Canal was dug in the 1830’s, local farmers, seeing a market for vegetables, drained the swamp and farmed it.

In 1938 the Basha Kill was again blocked off, this time by the New England Hurricane, but it was dredged out by the Army Corps of Engineers. This cycle of blocking and dredging was repeated in 1955. When the state purchased the land in the 1970’s, the DEC installed a dam at
Despite less than ideal weather, temperatures in the mid-40’s, a stiff north wind, and periodic drizzle, almost 100 hearty souls volunteered to rid the wetland ecosystem of noxious debris.

Mike Medley and Bill Lucas initiated the day’s proceedings by erecting the food tent and arranging tables and chairs throughout the site. Nora Brusinski excellently managed registration, ably assisted by Christine Saward, who dispensed door prize tickets. While furnishing garbage bags, Monique Lipton and Bill emphasized separating metal, aluminum, glass, and plastic from traditional trash and entering recyclables as one wastestream into a 10 yard receptacle supplied by Rock Hill’s Thompson Sanitation Corporation. About 30 pairs of disposable gloves were likewise available. Highly popular, they disappeared in minutes. Attendees next advanced to Paula Medley’s station, where they were organized into manageable groups for effective resource coverage.

This year’s participants included a local Girl Scout troop, who injected the event with their joie de vivre and 4 board members from the NYC Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Our youngest volunteers, whose robust spirits were unaffected by inclement conditions, represented Mamakating Library’s Basha Kill Kids Club. Most workers remarked on the paucity of rubbish compared to previous years, but others encountered significant flotsam and jetsam, particularly in remote areas. Some found more than they bargained for, like Matt Mordas who discovered a harmless, though disconcerting, Eastern Milksnake (See photo on page 7).

The recycling operation was “bare bones” as having a recyclable container eliminated need for separation bins and tables. Thanks to Fred Harding for brokering this fresh approach and to Fred and Bill for ensuring its proper functioning. Thompson Sanitation also generously supplied a 20 yard bin for regular detritus. The BKAA gratefully acknowledges this local business’ ongoing support.

The obligatory group photo was shot by Kevin Kreischer, the cleanup’s official photographer, who recorded candid images of event activities. President Paula Medley commended everyone for their exceptional accomplishments, particularly Jackie Broder and Lorry Green, who assumed the luncheon directors’ mantle from long-time lunch preparers, Marilyn and Bob Fiore, now residing in Pennsylvania. Kudos likewise to Linda Lou Bartle who was an indispensable troubleshooter for Jackie and Lorry.

While dining al fresco, individuals networked and perused BKAA merchandise, 7 purchasing signed John Haas birding guides, with all proceeds targeting the BKAA. Unique door prizes were donated by Kevin, Frances Nankin, and the Medleys.

In conclusion, our 38th Annual Cleanup was extremely productive as widespread litter was eradicated amidst a convivial atmosphere that fostered friendships and renewed old acquaintances. See you next year!

Thanks to the following who ensured a successful cleanup. We regret any errors.

Intrepid Cleanup Volunteers
... and One Snake

Harmless Eastern Milksnake Encountered by Matt Mordas (at right) Photo by Matt Mordas
Tick Talk: It’s Lyme Time

Justina Burton

(Editor’s Note: We are reprising this article from a year ago as its content remains timely.)

Last summer after three Urgent Care visits for tick removal and antibiotics, I resolved to never go into the woods again, not a great solution for someone who loves the outdoors. So instead, I armed myself with information by attending Tick Talk: It’s Lyme Time at the Mamakating Library, a class on ticks and Lyme disease by Jill Hubert-Simon, Sullivan County Public Health.

She reviewed;

- The types of ticks, diseases, their spread and incidence.
- How to protect yourself using insect repellents, clothing, heat, and showering.
- Protecting children and pets.
- How to keep our yards clear.
- Early detection and diagnosis, including proper tick removal and common tick folklore to ignore.

It was a well done informative session. Here are some web sites that cover what we need to know to co-exist safely with ticks.

https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/
https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html
http://www.tickencounter.org/ticksmart
https://thebashakill.org/

I’ll review how to safely walk across a lawn, hike the Bashakill trails, and climb our ridges.

Protecting children and pets.

How to keep our yards clear.

Early detection and diagnosis, including proper tick removal and common tick folklore to ignore.

So in 2016, we actually had 505 cases per 100,000 residents. There are multiple kinds of ticks and diseases and you can be infected with multiple diseases from one tick bite. These can be nasty, hard to detect, and chronic.

Where are ticks found?

Ticks are found in shady moist areas, in lawns and gardens, the edge of woods, around stone walls, in tall grass or low bushes and usually 18 to 24 inches off the ground. They don’t fly or jump or drop onto people.

Cover up

Wear closed shoes and light clothes so you can pick off the ticks. Tuck long pants into socks; tuck your long sleeved shirts into your pants and wear a hat. Use insect repellent, like Deet, Permethrin impregnated clothes and tested Botanical products.

Within two hours of arriving home, you and the children should disrobe, throw your clothes into a hot dryer, and...
Westbrookville just above the Pine Kill, permanently stabilizing the water level.

Benefits of a Wetland

Benefits of a Wetland

We now know that wetlands are crucial areas, not only for biodiversity, but for humans. Wetlands are nurseries of life and provide critical habitat for plants and animals. Over 30 varieties of fish, almost 200 species of birds, and scores of plants, reptiles, mammals, amphibians, and insects use the Basha Kill Wetlands.

Wetlands store flood water, protecting adjacent and downstream land from damage. When rushing floodwaters reach the wetlands, they spread out; as they slow down, they are absorbed into the ground.

Wetlands are critical for filtering and purifying groundwater. They trap not only silt and sediment, but also pesticides and nutrients. A huge aquifer called the Port Jervis Trough lies under the Basha Kill wetlands. The aquifer is a source of clean water for human inhabitants of the valley and provides water for the wetland itself. As water is removed from the aquifer, we risk loss of the wetland.

Unfortunately, and to the great detriment of the environment, New York lost an estimated 60% of its wetlands between the 1780’s and the 1980’s, according to US Geological Service Water Supply Paper 2425. Therefore, it is even more imperative that we continue to protect the Basha Kill wetlands.

WHO WE ARE continued from page 5

Westbrookville just above the Pine Kill, permanently stabilizing the water level.

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Summary of April 25th Forest and Wetland Management Presentation at the Mamakating Library

Nathan Ermer, DEC Regional Wildlife Manager

On April 25th, I spoke on forest and wetland management within the context of climate change as part of Mamakating Library’s “Drawdown” lecture and discussion series. “Drawdown” is a comprehensive plan, edited by Paul Hawken, discussing practical climate change solutions, readily implemented on a variety of scales. Effectiveness of each is quantified through a cost-benefit analysis, allowing for direct comparison of different strategies. A significant portion of the book is dedicated to climate change solutions focused on land-use patterns and planning. Among land use fixes, protection and enhancement of forest and wetland ecosystems are identified as having significant climate change benefits. These ecosystems furnish meaningful sequestration and long-term storage of carbon in their vegetation and soils.

My presentation’s premise was that New York’s (and the Northeast’s) forests and wetlands, including those at the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area (WMA), contribute significantly to overall carbon sequestration and will continue to do so if appropriately conserved and managed. In New York, safeguarding many wetlands is statutory, through Article 24 of New York’s Environmental Conservation Law and state regulation. Additional regulatory protections are included for smaller NY wetlands outside DEC’s jurisdiction through the federal Clean Water Act. Forests, while not generally afforded equivalent legal supports, currently occupy a greater percentage of New York’s land area than at any time in the last century. Good stewardship of these habitats will assure that they continue fulfilling their important carbon sequestration functions, along with contributing other benefits.

WETLAND continued on page 10

TICK TALK continued from page 8

take a shower. Remember, ticks gravitate to shady moist areas in the yard or on our bodies.

Your pets should also have flea and tick repellents, with dogs vaccinated against Lyme. When you get home, also check pets for ticks.

The yard

A fence to keep out deer is ideal, with a 3 foot buffer strip on the inside without greenery. Keep your lawn mowed to 3 inches high. Walk in the hot dry areas ticks don’t like. Compost mulch and remove brush piles to faraway corners.

The car

When you drive home from a hike, wipe down the seats using a delinter. A tick can survive for days in an empty car.

Tick Removal

Don’t irritate the tick by trying to suffocate it, using Vaseline or nail polish or by burning it off. These all make the tick burrow deeper.

Instead, using a pair of skinny edge tweezers, grasp the tick’s head as close to the body’s skin surface as you can and pull straight up. Kill the tick and date/store in alcohol or packing for 30 days. You will need it for testing if you develop tick disease symptoms. Wash, treat the site with an antibiotic ointment and cover with a band aid.

If you develop symptoms: chills, headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes or a rash, see your doctor.

The more we know, the better we can deal with this plague. While a solution is not imminent, there is work being done on vaccines for us, and the deer and mice that spread ticks.

“Let’s be careful out there.”*

*Hill Street Blues
Earth Day and Beyond at SUNY Sullivan

Kathryn Scullion

At SUNY Sullivan, we are extremely proud of becoming a more environmentally sustainable campus. Celebrating Earth Day, or Earth Week, as we did in April, enables us to showcase our initiatives and engage more students and community members in fun, educational, and service activities. Our Earth Week celebration took place from April 22-26. Highlights included an upcycled crafts workshop, seed starting and garden tour, cigarette butt and litter plucks, and trail clean-up. On Wednesday, April 24th, members of local environmental organizations set up tables on campus informing our community about the amazing natural and educational resources in our area. Along with Paula Medley from the BKAA, we were joined by representatives from Sullivan County Audubon, NY Department of Environmental Conservation, Catskill Watershed Corporation, Sullivan County Recycling, Sullivan County Public Health, National Park Service, Hancock Permaculture, Hope Farm, WJFF, and SUNY Sullivan Garden Club, Community Garden, and Green Building Maintenance and Management Program. Also on April 24th, we screened the National Geographic film Paris to Pittsburgh: The Climate for Change is Now. A former SUNY Sullivan student, and inspirational activist, Iris Gillingham, appeared in the film.

Earth Day 2019 may be behind us, but exciting environmental activity continues all over campus. Work on our Community Garden is in full swing. Despite the cold, rainy spring, we built five new 4’x16’ raised beds and repaired others that are showing wear after 10 growing seasons. We now have 34 beds rented to faculty, staff, students, and community members who grow their own vegetables, fruit, herbs, and flowers. We also have a large compost pile in the garden, combining pulled weeds and garden waste with pre-consumer vegetable waste from the cafeteria and culinary kitchens.

As the Community Garden commences its 11th season, our campus farm begins its 4th. Hope Farm is a 3-acre organic and permaculture operation adjoining the Community Garden. It involves a partnership between SUNY Sullivan and New Hope Community, with produce going to New Hope residents, SUNY Culinary Program, and local food pantries.

Beneath the farm, fluid circulates through deep closed-loop wells of our geothermal system, using the earth’s consistent temperature to heat or cool our buildings. A few fields away, 7056 photovoltaic modules collect solar energy and feed the electric grid with the equivalent of nearly 80% of our electricity use. A small solar array and wind turbine in front of the garden demonstrate home-scale renewable energy systems, and provide hands-on training.

Adjacent to the geothermal pump house, two cargo containers serve as convenient storage space for tools and equipment needed by the Excelsior Conservation Corps (ECC), based on campus since February. The ECC is a 10-month, New York-focused Americorps program, managed by the Student Conservation Association. The 42 young adults in this year’s program received extensive training in everything from wilderness first aid to trail construction, and are now traveling around the state doing conservation work and environmental education. Recently, when at the college between hitches, several volunteered in the Community Garden and on the Farm. They have been a wonderful addition to the SUNY Sullivan community.

We happily offer tours to groups or individuals wanting to learn more about our sustainability projects or programs. You may contact me, Kathy Scullion, at kscullion@sunysullivan.edu with any questions, or to schedule a visit.

WETLAND continued from page 9

ecosystem services.

One discussion topic was active forest management, including commercial timber harvesting. Quantifying the potential climate implications of timber harvesting can be complex, but if timber harvests are implemented in a responsible, sustainable manner, they are generally climate neutral over the long term. Young forests, developing rapidly following appropriate regenerative forest management actions, sequester carbon at high rates and enable important habitat for many wildlife species declining in recent decades. Wood removed during harvest is often converted to durable, long-lived wood products (building materials, furniture, etc.) where carbon is stored for decades (or longer) while firewood provides an alternative to heating with fossil fuels.

At the Bashakill, habitat management activities, including forest management, will be integrated into a Habitat Management Plan DEC is developing through our Young Forest Initiative. Though ensuring high-quality wildlife habitat is DEC’s primary goal in WMA’s, DEC also manages the Bashakill’s unique wetlands and forests to sustain other important ecological functions, like carbon sequestration, while offering a habitat resource location where visitors can connect with nature. Effective stewardship of Bashakill resources guarantees that area ecological and recreational values are not compromised.

I would like to thank Peggy Johansen, Director of the Mamakating Library, for organizing the “Drawdown” lecture and discussion series and for inviting me to participate, I would also like to thank Paula Medley and the Basha Kill Area Association for their tremendous support of DEC by being good stewards of the Bashakill and everyone attending on April 25th for their insightful questions and comments.
**Simple Ways to Help Wildlife**

*Ellen J. Kalish, Director, Ravensbeard Wildlife Center*

It was wonderful presenting another program in the lovely community of Wurtsboro on April 27 during Spring Fling. Thank you, BKAA for sponsoring Ravensbeard Wildlife Center once again. The audience was as quiet as a mouse and, like predators, members were sharp with their nature questions. It’s not surprising that a community having quality programs, guided tours, walks in the wetlands and the amazing, colorful newsletter, “The Guardian”, are wildlife knowledgeable. A big shout out to Paula, for proudly putting her seal of approval on each edition for the Basha Kill Area Association membership.

Something wonderful happens to a person gazing into the eyes of a bird, especially when it’s a bird that’s nocturnal and prides itself on being elusive like the owl. Once your eyes meet, wonder and curiosity are sparked. Curiosity brings longing for understanding and understanding creates passion and caring from that single glimpse. It’s not magic, but it becomes magical. Caring and passion then merge into compassion. Now we’re on the right track to **WILDLIFE continued on page 12**

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**SUNY Orange Celebrates Earth Day**

*Kirsten Gabrielsen, SUNY Orange Sustainability Coordinator*

SUNY Orange’s 2019 Earth Day celebrations were held at both Newburgh and Middletown campuses on different days, with various student clubs, Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners, 511NYRideshare/Clean AirNY, Protect Orange County, Sustainable Warwick, and other environmental groups, including the Basha Kill Area Association and Orange County Audubon Society. Our annual Earth Day plant sale again raised funds supporting continued growth of our Educational Gardens at both campuses. To date, we have installed the Native Woodland, Xeriscape, Devitt Center Wetland, and two Rain Gardens. All are maintained by volunteer faculty, staff, and students. Also, an Alpine Garden is currently proposed for a large planter on Middletown’s grounds.

While Earth Day events are our biggest and most visible sustainability related activities, the college’s Sustainability Committee and Coordinator work throughout the year on projects furthering SUNY Orange’s mission to lower our overall carbon footprint. This year, to assess our efforts, we submitted SUNY Orange’s Third Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System Report (STARS) and received a SILVER rating. The previous two submissions, 2011 and 2014, attained BRONZE ratings. Additionally, the college merited recognition as a Clean Air NY Campus. SUNY Orange was recognized by Clean Air NY for “our outstanding commitment to region-wide air quality efforts, including a commuter portal and a campus shuttle program.”

If you would like further information on any items mentioned in this article, please contact me at kirsten.gabrielsen@sunyorange.edu or visit www.sunyorange.edu/sustainability.

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**SUNY Orange Earth Day Event 2019**

*Nora Brusinski*

On April 25, Christine Saward and I attended SUNY Orange’s Earth Day celebration as BKAA representatives. The weather was sunny and beautiful. Our table was set up on the Alumni Green, which also hosted an acrobatics show and barbecue. We distributed maps and brochures to visitors as we promoted the Basha Kill’s natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Some students had visited the Basha Kill before, while others were hearing about it for the first time.

Besides the BKAA, other organizations participated in Earth Day activities. Many focused on reducing, reusing, and recycling, such as BRIDGES, the Rad Tech Club shoe drive, Thrall Library Repair Café, Waste Reduction & Recycling, Sustainability Games & TerraCycle, and Trash to Treasure. Other booths, involving O&R Energy Efficiency and SunCommon, featured green energy solutions, while Protect Orange County spread an anti-fracking message. Green transportation and reducing environmental impacts of commuting were highlighted by 511NY Rideshare & Clean AirNY and Orange County Transportation. The Middletown Shade Tree Committee and Sustainable Warwick addressed environmental effects within their specific communities. Booths with diverse topics included Ask a Master Gardener, Green Careers, Orange County Audubon Society, Shaklee, the SADHA Dental Hygiene Club, and SUNY Orange Plant Sale.

We are glad that this Earth Day event inspired some students to visit the Basha Kill.
Developing raptors’ homes contributes to a healthy planet.

Contributing to wildlife decline are habitat loss, along with global warming and weather disturbances. It’s happening little by little, lot by lot, in New York, as well as around the world with massive logging, clear-cutting, burning and replacing native forests with imported crops. A recent article in the New York Times read, “40% of the world’s bird populations are in peril.” That’s alarming!! So, what can we do right now, here, locally?

DONATE! Choose a non-profit possessing a good reputation that has been around for years, like Ravensbeard. Together, we can make a difference!

Our mission:

Ho mitakue oyasin. In the Lakota language these words mean “all my relations” - a simple yet profound perspective that honors all life’s connections on the planet. It is respect for each living creature that guides our work at Ravensbeard Wildlife Center.

Ravensbeard provides wildlife rehabilitation so injured, ill or orphaned birds can return to the wild. We promote community awareness, education and appreciation for the natural circle of life, offering hands-on opportunities to work with many different species. Through these endeavors, Ravensbeard fosters a community dedicated to mutual respect and loving kindness.

Currently, we partner with Girl Scouts in Ghent to build and distribute nest boxes for owls and other cavity nesters. Together, we solicit donations from local hardware stores for materials and recruit students and parents to construct and install the boxes. We’ll create designs for three different species, the barn, barred and great-horned owls. Our goal is educating the community about our mission and installing owl boxes on farms, parks and recreation areas, waterways, private homes and along roadsides.

Developing raptors’ homes contributes to a healthy planet. This work benefits everyone. Additionally, nest boxes are sold online in specialty and big box stores. On the internet, you can also find plans for building your own boxes. Research types of birds you want to attract, then place the appropriate box in the most likely nesting locations. Birds which use nest boxes are Owls, American Kestrels, Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Sapsuckers, Wood Ducks, Golden Eye and Bufflehead Ducks, Wrens, Nuthatches, Chickadees, Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Purple Martins and some Sparrows. Those depending on dead trees for shelter or old barns and outbuildings are finding less habitat to call home. They need our help.

PLEASE don’t cut down a dead tree because it looks bad. Trees are treasure chests of food for insect eaters and havens for mammals and birds. Leaving nature undisturbed will reduce rodent and insect problems naturally.

Create a water source, such as a bird bath, fountain or fish pond. All animals love running water. If you’re worried about mosquitoes breeding, empty and refill your birdbath every 2-4 days. It takes 10-14 days for mosquitoes to mature. Having fish in your pond automatically eliminates mosquito problems.

Don’t use pesticides or poisons on your yard or lawn. They indiscriminately destroy beneficial insects, amphibians, birds and small mammals. Top predators in the food chain are arriving at rehab and dying after eating poisoned rodents, fish, birds, etc.

Lawsuits are initiating against Roundup Weedkiller (Monsanto). Cancer has been confirmed in humans with prolonged Roundup exposure. What a surprise? Why do so many dogs and cats contract cancer? Traces of these poisons are also found in streams, ponds and rivers due to years of repeated contact.

Please DO NOT buy glue traps; they are inhumane. We have had to untangle many birds from them. At Ravensbeard, we use snap traps or Havahart so rodents can be returned outside.

Decrease lawn size. Lawns diminish food supply and wildlife habitat.

Compost household vegetation. Why cart it to the dump?

Recycle, reuse and repurpose. Save water, electricity, oil and gas.

KEEP your cats inside! They’ll live longer and remain healthier. Cats are not native to North America. They originated in the Middle East in 8,000 BC. Our domestic cuddly balls of fur, welcoming us home at night, become serious sniper-poachers when outside. Cats don’t understand rules of hunting. They don’t discriminate. They kill an incubating adult bird or all of the nestlings silently, for sheer entertainment. We feed cats expensive food and cater to their finicky tastes by rotating canned food when they become bored. Yes, they have us trained! But all kidding aside, it’s simple to maintain them indoors with few lifestyle changes. Each wild bird is worth it. Confining cats inside has been endorsed by the National Humane Society, calling it a win/win situation.

If you want your kitty to be outside, Google “catio spaces” for outdoor enclosures.

Feral cat populations must be reported and removed. Cats alone are responsible for killing approximately 4 billion songbirds, and nearly 22 billion small mammals and reptiles per year. Think about that....

Feline Leukemia is the #1 infectious cat disease, mainly spread by feral colonies. An indoor cat will be virtually free from ticks and fleas, and not exposed to Rabies, Distemper,
BKAA Sponsored Ravensbeard “Live Bird Show”

Barred Owl with Ellen Kalish

Barn Owl

All Photos by Kevin Kreischer

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Barred Owl

American Kestrel

Eastern Screech Owl

Harris Hawk

All Photos by Kevin Kreischer
West Nile or other diseases. Additionally, they are safe from large animal attacks and vehicle collisions, 47% of feline deaths are caused by cars.

Some countries, like Australia, totally ban cats because they have many ground indigenous nesting species that are nearing extinction.

Use decals, windsocks, mobiles or sheer drapes to reduce window strikes. Keep outdoor lights off at night.

Feed the birds year round if not in bear country. Simply spread enough seed for the day on the ground. I use an old picnic table as a dedicated bird feeder.

Mulching gardens, reduces weeds and retains moisture. Before pruning, mowing or cutting trees, check for toads, bird or bunny nests.

Grow plants that are native.

I read a study by Dr. Douglas Tallamy, currently Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He has researched local flora and fauna for over 30 years and his findings were astounding. He targeted a neighborhood that was only a few years old, not close to farms or forests. It was a beautifully landscaped development; the homes had perfect curb appeal, but everything native had been replaced by ornamental trees and shrubs. Tallamy’s focus was on a nest of Black-capped Chickadees. It takes between 6,000 – 9,000 insects and caterpillars to feed a family of birds in one season. Finding grubs was too time consuming so the chickadees fed on what was available, seed from local feeders. Most native foliage supports insects and animals as food sources. Native butterflies and caterpillars depend on a specific plant to survive, such as milkweed for Monarchs. When these plants are scarce, food is hard to find. As the chickadees grew larger, they became weaker and eventually died of malnutrition and metabolic bone disease before they could fly. Unfortunately, many resort areas are also in the same position; having been treated to the point of sterility. Nature’s balance is lost.

Hummingbirds are easy to feed and fascinating to watch. Feeders are inexpensive and a colorful addition to your yard. We have only one species of hummingbirds in the Northeast. It’s the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Males travel north at the end of April and females usually arrive 2 - 3 weeks later. A hummingbird’s young are raised solely by the female. She builds a nest of lichens connected by layers of spiderwebs and lays two tiny eggs in a nest, the size of a quarter. Baby hummingbirds are not just fed nectar. They eat gnats, mosquitoes and other small insects filled with protein needed for rapid growth.

Hummingbird Food: mix 4 parts boiling water to 1 part sugar. Let cool. Fill more than one feeder and let the fun begin. Remember to wash feeders before each refill. Harmful mold can occur if water remains.

New York State is home to 9 species of bats, 6 cave dwellers (also use boxes) and 3 living in trees. So, put up a bat box to encourage roosting. Did you know bats eat up to half their weight in insects a night? If you aren’t familiar with bat boxes it can be fun to watch bats come and go from them. Boxes may be installed on the side of your house, garage, barn or outbuildings and placing more than one may bring different species. Bats are your best neighbors. They’re nocturnal, out all night, sleeping and totally quiet by day, and at dusk they ravenously eat as many flying insects as they can catch.

Bats haven’t had it easy. They’ve endured the White-nose Syndrome, which is a fungal disease causing mortalities in populations of hibernating bats in North American cave dwellings. They’re on the rebound but over half of some populations have been eradicated.

Eat less meat and dairy. Greenhouse gasses (methane) emanating from the cattle industry are higher than those of the auto industry.

Write to your congressman.

Check these references to learn more about how to support our local wildlife.

abcbirds.org, American Bird Conservancy
Cornell Lab of Ornithology - cats indoors
NY Times - Cat attacks on birds
Humane Society - cats gone wild
Catio spaces
Catskillnativenerugery.com
Audubon.org native plants
Cornell Cooperative Extension - native plants
National Wildlife Federation - Garden for Wildlife

“If you cut down the goldenrod, the wild black cherry, the milkweed and other natives, you eliminate the larvae and starve the birds.” - Douglas Tallamy

Congratulations, you can use some of these ideas to begin a healthy ripple effect starting with your own backyard.

Thank you for caring and please donate to our not-for-profit.

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In 2020, Ravensbeard will celebrate 20 years of volunteering our services to the community by offering free medical care and attention to all wild birds.
2019 Catherine Abate Memorial BKAA Scholarship Winners

(Editor’s Note: Three years ago, Michael Abate established 3 scholarships honoring his late wife, Catherine, a loyal BKAA member and passionate environmental activist. Scholarship applications for graduating high school seniors required essays identifying local environmental problems and ways to mitigate them. The following are the winning essays.)

MADISON GRAHAM
Monticello Central School District

One local environmental problem for Sullivan County is salting the roads in the winter for safe traveling. The salt is used to melt ice and snow so drivers and pedestrians can be safe on roads and walkways. The salt used by The Department of Transportation employees is harmful to the environment. It causes harm to household pets such as dogs and cats because it dries their paws out which causes them to crack. The salt lowers the freezing point of the ice which turns it into water and the salt then combines with the melted ice. From that reaction the salt is washed away into our water systems and ground soil. This causes contamination to both our drinking and food supplies. In order to eliminate this environmental problem there needs to be an alternative for the road salt. The alternative will have to have the same abilities as the salt for ice but be safe for the environment. There is a substitution that can have the same effect on the freezing point and cause traction; this product is called Organic Salt-free Deicer. This substance is a product that has the same qualities that normal road salt has but it has benefits that cause no harm to both animals and humans. This product could be washed away into ground soil and the water source and cause no contamination. With this product The Department of Transportation would have to increase spending money because this eco friendly product is extremely costly. However, there are other alternatives that are cheaper, and they can still eliminate the environmental problem. Businesses and families can use sugar beet juice to prevent slippery roads and sidewalks. Sugar beet juice can lower the melting point of ice and snow just like rock salt which creates safer travelling for all. This home recipe is harmless to animals, people, and the environment. Overall, these are two alternatives that can be considered to eliminate contamination and harm on animals in the environment.

SCHOLARSHIP continued on page 17

The BKAA Hosts Leadership Sullivan 2019 at the Basha Kill

Terry Grafmuller, Board Secretary

On May 21, Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Foundation Leadership Sullivan (LS) Class of 2019 visited the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Mamakating. For eleven years, the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) has hosted tours and informational programs for LS. This session started at the Visitors Center with BKAA outdoor educator Mike Medley, discussing the wetland’s value and critical natural assets. Later, at the main boat launch on South Road, Paula Medley focused on the BKAA organization, its history and mission. During her talk, Paula challenged 2019’s LS members to join the BKAA for a minimal $10.00 per year as no participants from previous classes have enrolled. Afterwards, everyone viewed nesting bald eagles through a spotting scope and then hiked to an observation tower with Mike. During the walk, they encountered a several days old fawn, a trip highlight. It is amazing how many living in this county their entire lives have no idea that this beautiful piece of nature exists right under their noses. This was definitely true for 2019’s LS class members, who also thought it wonderful to see people so passionate about their environment. Thank you, BKAA, for being an important part of our LS agenda.

LS is administered by Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Foundation and is celebrating its twentieth year. The foundation consists of a volunteer board of 18 to 22 members, who chair committees directing each class, along with board committees that manage finances, alumni, graduation, et al. Annually, from September to May, students (employees of county businesses and agencies) visit critical county facilities to learn about their functions. Every month has a theme, like tourism, agriculture, education, crime and justice, media and communications, environment.

Each class is also charged with completing a project that helps a Sullivan County not-for-profit. This effort usually includes fundraising and hands-on activities. This is where leadership skills are honed. The underlying hope is that class participants become more engaged in their communities and better contributors to this wonderful county where they live. The 2019 class collected funds and created family-sized toiletry, baby, and laundry kits for families involved with Safe Homes of Orange and Sullivan Counties and also provided $2,000.00 in $25 gift cards from Shop Rite and Walmart. This effort significantly impacted Safe Homes programs as the class exceeded their goals by almost 200%.

Most counties have endeavors similar to LS, which have proven to be very beneficial. The better educated residents and business people become about crucial county resources, the more Sullivan County will flourish. For added information about LS, go to www.leadershipssullivan.org or find us on Facebook.
You would think the environment would be one of the most crucial issues at hand for the people, and more importantly the government of the United States. Unfortunately that is not the case anymore. Our environment is spiraling downwards, climate change is getting worse and worse and showing more apparent signs. One of the things playing a part in climate change is hydraulic fracturing, better known as tracking. This is an issue across America, but more importantly, it affects areas around us within New York.

Fracking, like any nonrenewable energy source, comes from deep within the Earth. In order to retrieve what is called Marcellus shale gas, water, sand, and chemicals are forced underground into a well at high pressures to crack open layers of rock in order to release oil or gas trapped within them. Although it is a natural gas, Marcellus shale provides a cleaner power source than that of coal, which New York got about half of its electricity from gas-burning plants in 2014. Though this process has its pros, it also has its many cons. The fracking “cocktail” includes things like acids, detergents, and poisons that are extremely harmful if gotten into drinking water. The worst part is, these often times are not regulated by federal law, leaving businesses to use whatever they please while proceeding. Methane gas, which is known to be flammable, could possibly cause explosions once released from a well. This gas could also be burned, creating carbon dioxide which harms the ozone layer and causes climate change. Along with air pollution, water pollution is also an issue. Water from all gas wells often returns to the surface containing extremely low but measurable concentrations of radioactive elements and huge concentrations of salt. Areas around Pine Bush, like Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster County all lay on a huge resource of the gas extracted by fracking. If given the chance to create a site locally, it could do damage to water sources, especially those that flow into the Hudson River. Along with these issues, the CPV Power Plant is powered by fracked gas, posing as a fairly big issue within this area. Residents within the plant’s distance are already experiencing issues with air quality, and this will only grow worse in the years to come.

Though there is a statewide ban on fracking, fracked gas from other nearby states being delivered locally is easily becoming a big problem that no one seems to be paying attention to. This Marcellus shale gas contaminates both the water, earth, and air around us. To bring about a solution to this issue, more bans need to be put into effect. The people, especially in local areas, need to be aware, and propose other bans, much like the one passed by Cuomo in 2014 that prohibited fracking within New York State. Whether it be suggesting ideas to local government, or arranging peaceful protests in order to stop pollution, something needs to be done in order to live in a clean environment.

Though there is a statewide ban on fracking, fracked gas from other nearby states being delivered locally is easily becoming a big problem that no one seems to be paying attention to. This Marcellus shale gas contaminates both the water, earth, and air around us. To bring about a solution to this issue, more bans need to be put into effect. The people, especially in local areas, need to be aware, and propose other bans, much like the one passed by Cuomo in 2014 that prohibited fracking within New York State. Whether it be suggesting ideas to local government, or arranging peaceful protests in order to stop pollution, something needs to be done in order to live in a clean environment.

An extremely threatening environmental issue is the decline in bee population. This is a worldwide problem, which makes it a local one as well. The first step in trying to solve environmental issues is for the world to work together as a whole, and not as separate places defined by map lines. Honey bees are essential to food production, as their pollination is necessary to most of the foods we consume. Climate change, insecticides, and habitat loss are some of the main reasons in the population decline. If this issue is not solved, it will be economically destructive and bad for wildlife. Yet there are ways to help the bee crisis that our local community can take part in. A great first step would be to move towards organic gardening. This is an alternative agricultural system that relies on basic and natural gardening techniques. Examples would be to use compost or manure rather than store bought fertilizers, and learning the patterns of garden pests to adapt to their havoc in natural ways. Organic gardening would not only be helpful to bees, but its health benefits for humans and the environment are abundant. Another simple way to promote the bee population is to purchase bee blocks and other housing for bees to live in. It is also beneficial to plant things that bees feed on, like clover, lavender, and sage. Another step to take is to support local beekeepers by buying their honey and other products they may sell. These solutions are simple, but could truly help the future of bees and everything that humans rely on them for.

Growing up with the forest and mountains that New York provides is my preferred form of entertainment, I have always understood the value of the environment. But unfortunately, appreciating nature comes with the burden of knowing the rapid destruction of it. This is why it is so important to conserve the lands and species that I am lucky enough to have not only for ourselves, but for the future children of the world. They too should get the opportunity to know what it is like to roll around in the grass, and to enjoy the riches that species like bees provide.
Maryallison Farley Receives Bald Eagle Environmental Award

Paula Medley

At the Mamakating Democratic Committee brunch on Sunday, April 7, Maryallison Farley was honored with the Bald Eagle Environmental Award (See photo on page 27).

When introducing Maryallison, Paula Medley highlighted the honoree’s outstanding achievements including:

• BKAA President- (3 ½ years). During her tenure, the BKAA challenged the 2001 Master Plan and Yukiguni Maitake Mushroom Plant.
• Founder and co-leader, for 17 years, of Nature Watch, which utilizes Maryallison’s home as its organizational base.
• Initiated development of the BKAA’s iconic brochure, a critical public relations/educational tool.
• Created the BKAA’s Alerts’ system, facilitating educational and advocacy efforts.
• Raised BKAA annual dues from $5 to $10.
• Served for 7 years on a committee writing the Basha Kill Wetlands Field Guide.
• BKAA website coordinator
• Recipient of the BKAA’s highest accolade, the Great Blue Heron Award.

Maryallison was lauded for tirelessly and tenaciously educating visitors encountered on her daily Basha Kill forays about the wetland resource and BKAA.

Besides the preceding, Maryallison was lauded for teaching visitors about which birds would breed in the Basha Kill and which were just migrating through, stopping to eat and rest, like the common loon, which he said breeds in the Adirondacks.

“We have a whole list of birds that ended up showing up here because it’s such a fabulous place with such a food source and everything for the birds and animals,” Haas said.

Keeping an eagle eye on nature

'Wow!' moments galore in store for Basha Kill visitors

Kathy Swanwick

(Eligibility Note: This content orginally appeared in the April 28, 2019 edition of the Times Herald-Record’s Living Here special publication. Reprinted with permission of the Times Herald-Record.)

The vibrant music and diversity of trills, warbles and chirps draw visitors’ attention even before they see the birds, waterfowl and animals of the Basha Kill wetlands in Wurtsboro.

Very quickly, though, geese flying overhead come into focus. A male wood duck, with his dramatic, green-crested head, bold markings and bright red eyes glides in for a landing, his wings splashing across the surface of the water as he comes to rest. Startled muskrats scurry from the shore and dive for safety.

And nesting bald eagles, settled in a huge evergreen tree far from shore, tend to their young, thrilling onlookers from the banks.

It’s a scene that visitors at this year’s Nature Watch, sponsored by the all-volunteer Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA), might expect to witness for themselves, say some of the association’s members.

“The highlight is that we have two high-powered spotting scopes set up, one of which is always on the bald eagle nest.” said Maryallison Farley, co-leader of the annual Nature Watch. “From a safe distance, visitors can view a nesting pair and their eaglets as they grow. We get many a ‘Wow!’ moment as visitors see a bald eagle in the wild for the first time.”

To facilitate those moments, the BKAA holds a yearly training session to familiarize their newer volunteers with the rich bio-diversity of the wetland.

Expert birders John Haas and Lance Verderame were the featured speakers at this year’s training, presenting a slide show on the hundreds of species of birds and their habitats that can be found there.

During spring migration in the second week in May, Verderame noted, 130 species have been spotted in the Basha Kill in one day.

He showed the volunteers slides of birds and waterfowl like the American woodcock, egrets, ospreys, ring-necked ducks, male ruby-throated hummingbirds, male yellow warblers, buffleheads, red-necked grebes, hooded mergansers and the tundra swan, which is “fairly rare” in the Basha Kill.

He educated the audience about which birds would breed in the Basha Kill and which were just migrating through, stopping to eat and rest, like the common loon, which he said breeds in the Adirondacks.

“We have a whole list of birds that ended up showing up here because it’s such a fabulous place with such a food source and everything for the birds and animals,” Haas said.
after the presentation. “They can come here and they can rest up and refuel before they move onto other locations.”

Once trained, the new volunteers sign up for three shifts and are paired with more seasoned volunteers to best help people who come to visit. They will give out maps of the area and will have copies of BKAA newsletters and other educational material available. One brochure explains that the Basha Kill cleanses drinking water, controls flood waters and contains habitats for more than 30 varieties of fish, 200 species of birds as well as numerous plants, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and insects.

The volunteers will also help heighten visitors’ awareness about bald eagles and the need to protect them. There are currently two breeding pairs of bald eagles – one with chicks in the nest – as well as two or three older juveniles that can be seen in the Basha Kill most days, said Haas.

“The volunteers who are doing this are very passionate about the wetlands,” said Paula Medley, who has been the BKAA’s board president for 17 years. “So, you can expect that you’re going to have a lot of information conveyed to you.”

“Our Basha Kill is one little spot on Earth that has drawn birds, literally, from all the world,” said Haas, who has been birding in the wetland for the past 28 years, and wrote the book “Birding Guide to Sullivan County, New York Including the Bashakill Wildlife Area” as a fundraiser for the BKAA.

Haas’ book, and the BKAA’s “Basha Kill Wetlands: A Field Guide,” will be available for sale at the Nature Watch as well.

One of the best “celebrity” birds Haas said he saw last year in the Basha Kill was the Eurasian wigeon, which breeds in Europe, Asia and Iceland.

“It came and spent 17 days at the Basha Kill,” he said, adding that more than 300 people came to see the bird. Other unusual birds he’s spotted there are the purple gallinule, which migrated from Florida, and the LeConte’s sparrow, which flew in from Canada.

The Bashakill Wildlife Management Area consists of about 3,000 acres and is managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The BKAA acts as an ancillary organization, helping to protect the site, which is the largest freshwater wetland in southeastern New York. They serve as “watchdogs” for the wetland and are alert to anything that might threaten the area, like pollution, vandalism and unwise development in the watershed and surrounding area.

The Nature Watch takes place on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through June 23 and is open to the public. It is held at the main boat launch, across from Bashakill Vineyards at 1131 South Rd. Admission is free. Visit www.thebashakill.org for more information.

IF YOU GO

What: Nature Watch at the Basha Kill wetlands. Trained volunteers educate visitors about bald eagles and ospreys nesting at the Basha Kill, as well as the many other plant and animal residents.

When: Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., through June 23

Where: Main boat launch, across from Bashakill Vineyards at 1131 South Road, Wurtsboro

Price: Admission is free; open to the public

More info: www.thebashakill.org
BKAA Members’ Photos in Times Herald-Record Article

A bullfrog is reflected in Basha Kill waters. Photo by Kevin Kreischer

Snapping Turtle photo by Barbara Heitz
Daisies at the Basha Kill wetlands. Photo by Linda Lou Bartle

A male wood duck takes a swim. Photo by Kevin Kreischer

A majestic bald eagle from a southern Basha Kill nest. Photo by Linda Kantjas

Visitors using a spotting scope. Photo by Linda Lou Bartle
Family kayaking back to boat launch. Photo by Frank Coviello

Nature Watch in Action

Nature Watch adult bald eagle. Photo by Frank Coviello

Nature Watch kiosk visitors. Photo by John Kocijanski

Nature Watch visitors viewing eagles. Volunteer Steve Colman in yellow vest. Photo by John Kocijanski
Spring Hike on Gobbler’s Knob

Diane Day

Saturday morning turned out to be a beautiful, sunny spring day! Perfect for a hike!

Andy Garrison and Kevin McGuinness of New York-New Jersey Trail Conference led the 10 member group gathered at the Bashakill fishing platform parking lot on Indian Orchard Road (Orange County’s name for South Road). Hikers consisted of the O’Brien family, Mary, David, and daughter Christie from New Hampton, New York, Timothy Paulding, Steve Katz, Fran Hartman, and me from Wurtsboro, and the Velangi family from Bayonne, New Jersey, their baby tagging along on daddy’s back!

The teal green marked Long Path started off Otisville Road with the steepest 2 mile section consisting of boulder stepping stones, leading to a beautiful clearing at the 1,000 foot summit, providing magnificent long distance views of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York.

The summit was just the hike’s beginning, as the trail then meandered along a woodland dappled by sunlight peeking through fresh green leaves budding from surrounding trees. We crossed a few babbling brooks along the way. Occasionally, Kevin pointed out trees with bark rubbed off by numerous deer that call the woodlands “home”.

At the end of two miles, stopping for a water break, Andy asked, “Would you like to finish here and head back to our cars? Or would you like to backtrack our route and make it a 4 mile hike day?” As the hiking experience thus far had been manageable for everyone, we enthusiastically chose to continue.

The whole trip lasted approximately 3 hours and provided plenty of fresh air, great conversations with new friends, and beautiful surroundings. Afterwards, some decided to extend their day at the Wildlife Management Area by visiting the BKAA “Nature Watch” group at the boat launch and the Bashakill Vineyards. I would say a fun time was had by all with participants recommending this Gobbler’s Knob hike to others!

John Haas’ Spring Migration Warbler Walk

Frank Coviello

It’s 8am Saturday, May 4, 2019; the sky is overcast and temperatures are in the mid to upper 50’s, a bit cool with the possibility of rain, yet 16 people gathered at the Stop Sign Parking Lot to walk and listen to John Haas. John, a premier birder and author of several books, donates his time, sharing birding knowledge and experiences, like those involving the prevailing Spring Warbler Migration.

We began at the Stop Sign Trail and the walk more than lived up to its name. Numerous Warblers were heard and seen, including Palm, Black and White, Chestnut Sided, and Nashville. Sights, however, were not limited to Warblers. Catbirds, Veerys, Baltimore Orioles, a Bittern, Hummingbird, and Magnolias were also noted. Blue Jays were especially abundant since they were in the middle of their migration.

Besides birds, Red Efts and an early blooming blueberry bush were likewise observed.

A stop was made at the Environmental Center to introduce it to first time visitors and to utilize indoor facilities.

Dropping by the main boat launch on South Road enabled eagle viewing, enhanced by scopes managed by Nature Watch volunteers, Nora Brusinski, Gef Chumard, and Michael Dunckley. Two young eagles occupied the nest and two adults were observed in nearby tree tops.

Event attendees came from various locations including Wurtsboro, Yankee Lake, Kingston, and Cuddebackville.

This was my second Warbler Walk with John and second Waterfowl one during the last two years. Outings are never the same and always interesting and exciting. It is my intention to attend them as long as John is willing to lead. I encourage everyone to consider participating, even if you are not a birder. I am not.

BKAA Participates in Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) Brochure Exchange

Bill Lucas

Paula Medley and I attended this annual event on behalf of the BKAA, a SCVA member. This year it was held at the new KARTRITE RESORT AND INDOOR WATERPARK in Monticello on May 8. Here, we conveyed the Basha Kill’s benefits to circulating participants.

The resort is open on a limited basis, awaiting finishing touches and mitigation of the usual startup kinks. Architecture is handsome, fitting into the rural setting, unlike neighboring ultra-modern Resorts World Catskills Casino.

The brochure exchange involved over 100 local member businesses/associations organized out of vehicles in facing rows to display promotional wares and highlight their attractions. Everything was on a friendly, efficient Sullivan County PR basis.

Attendees included area newspapers, Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, Sullivan Renaissance, Upper Delaware Council, SUNY Sullivan, and tourist centered local restaurants, lodgings, recreational ventures, farms, et al. The BKAA is one of the few environmental groups affiliated with SCVA.

The exchange was preceded by hospitality training within the KARTRITE’s conference facilities and ended with a barbeque in the parking lot. Fortunately, the weather was gorgeous, a first class Sullivan County spring day.
On a beautiful, sunny Sunday morning 22 enthusiastic hikers joined Gary Keeton and Kerron Barnes for the May 19 walk on a 1.2 mile stretch of the O&W Trail. The land, comprising 52 acres, was recently donated to the Town of Mamakating by Open Space Institute and runs parallel to the D&H Canal from the east end of Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro to McDonald Road. After a very rainy early spring, folks old and new to BKAA outings arrived from Wurtsboro, Pine Island, Spring Glen, Parksville, Port Jervis, Bloomingburg, Wolf and Masten Lakes. We returned to our cars on the D&H towpath for a total 2.5 mile loop on flat and fairly dry terrain.

Gary and Kerron made for a great team as they guided us through this unique pathway through history. Gary, a regular BKAA outing leader, weaves a broad understanding of geology, plant and animal life, and natural and human history into an integrated story that runs from the post-glacial (mastodon) age to present day. Kerron, Interagency Coordinator and grant writer for Mamakating, strongly advocates for funding and development of the natural and historic assets of this amazing section of the Shawangunk Valley and Bashakill Watershed. Together they shared their knowledge and appreciation of many distinctive sights along the way.

The first thing to strike the casual observer is, “Who chooses to lay a rail line through a swamp?” The reason was the same for those who dug the D&H Canal almost 50 years earlier. This area is part of a long, relatively flat, straight stretch that required no locks, sharp turns or steep inclines for rolling stock. But the wet terrain, with numerous stream crossings as well as natural and beaver-made ponds, presented other engineering challenges. The railbed needed to be built up above the high water table. Chestnut timbers were hand hewn for stream crossings. And in one long distance, the railbed was dug down below a long, wooded incline to keep tracks level.

Tree and plant growth was endemic to that found in wet swampy areas: pin oak, ash, red maple, beeb willow, hybrid swamp azalea and wild geranium. Most impressive were large white pines reaching skyward from the old railbed edge. Gary pointed out that these enormous, towering pines must have started growing when the rail line, essentially a local milk run, was de-commissioned. The most exciting sighting was a huge, rear footprint of a beaver that Gary estimated weighed 45 pounds. Both Gary and Kerron educated participants on the residential real estate needs and habits of beavers, whose excavation efforts were seen along the trail.

The return walk on the canal towpath revealed evidence of motorized recreational vehicles prohibited on the trail and towpath. Town intervention is hampered by limited enforcement capabilities and by county ownership of some trail sections. Educating citizens on the fragile ecology and harmful impacts of off-road vehicles may be a solution.

The rail trail and towpath are continually being enhanced thanks to Kerron Barnes, who is responsible for D&H Canal and O&W Rail Trail grant writing for Mamakating. The gates, benches, kiosks, signage, eventual viewing deck and bridge repair result from matching grants from the Sullivan County Plans and Progress Program and Sullivan County Renaissance. Kerron was also responsible for securing a $1.3 million federal grant for towpath improvements, necessitating a Town contribution as well.

Thank you to Gary, Kerron and BKAA for insuring that these amazing natural and historical assets are preserved and maintained for the future benefit of all.

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**BKAA Action and Information Alerts**

are sent from the following email address:

libertylithoink@yahoo.com

To ensure that emails reach your Inbox, and not your junk or spam folder, add this address to your safe senders list (called ‘whitelisting’).

Your email provider or security service (if you use one) may have their own instructions for adding an email address to a whitelist. Look up instructions with the provider or service you use.
2019 BKAA Educational Outings

Photos by Frank Coviello

Spring Migration Warblers Walk

Photos by Diane Day

Gobbler’s Knob

Remember to stay hydrated while hiking
Regional DEC Wildlife Biologist Nate Ermer Presenting the Role of Forests and Wetlands in Reversing Global Warming.

Photo by Frank Coviello
Wolf Tales

The Basha Kill Area Association:
Protecting the Wilderness Next Door

Wolf Lake’s guiding philosophy of “Forever Wild” helps ensure that we can continue to enjoy the natural beauty and bounty of our community and pass them on to future generations. Our Conservation Committee is charged with maintaining and protecting our lands and lakes and the wildlife they support. But we have little control over what goes on outside our borders, where several planned large-scale developments such as the Thompson Education Center could have adverse effects on our natural environment, including our groundwater and the abundant wildlife at Wolf Lake.

For more than 45 years, the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) has fought to protect the nearby Bashakill Wildlife Management Area from degradation caused by development. Because the efforts of the BKAA benefit Wolf Lake by protecting a vital neighboring wildlife habitat and providing thousands of acres of wilderness for the public’s enjoyment, we asked BKAA president Paula Medley to tell us a little bit about the group and its work.

What does the BKAA do?
Ever since we were founded in 1972, the focus of our activity has been to prevent the ecological degradation of the Bashakill watershed, which are the 33,000 acres of the Bashakill and the surrounding areas that water flows through on its way to the Bashakill wetlands. We’re a completely volunteer organization, which means that I and the other people involved are truly passionate about what we’re doing. We take our advocacy seriously: Once a decision is made by BKAA leadership to take on an issue, we stay with it until it’s resolved. We do not give up easily.

What are some of your victories?
We staved off the development of a mushroom plant that would have covered 50 acres off McDonald Road, near Kohl’s, and could have drawn up to a million gallons of water from the aquifer daily. We did not win in court, but we delayed and delayed until other forces blocked the construction. We’ve established a water testing program for the Bashakill and the streams that flow into it and, most recently, we’ve been participating on the advisory committee for the comprehensive plan for land use for the Town of Mamakating.

What has changed since the BKAA was founded?
Threats to the natural environment here are nothing new. But people’s awareness of natural resources and their feeling of empowerment to protect them are greater. People realize our natural environment is finite, so threats to it are taken more seriously nowadays. I’m in my 15th year as president. When I started, people saw us as intruding into their business. But now there’s an acceptance of organizations like ours. We’re not viewed as the threat we once were.

What are the chief threats currently to Bashakill?
The Thompson Education Center is on a 568 acre parcel that forms the western boundary of the Bashakill watershed, so it’s one of the top threats. The project is moving at a snail’s pace but it’s not dead yet. Another threat is ongoing activity at the Falun Gong development in Deerpark. The group there is constantly doing various developments without getting proper permits. What happens there goes into the Bashakill and flows into the Neversink. We also have to continue to watch an agribusiness development near the Wurtsboro airport. On the surface, it sounds like an eco-enterprise we should be excited about, and we will be as long as it follows all the rules.

What can the residents of Wolf Lake do to support your work?
Join the BKAA. It costs $10. Members get our newsletter and can sign up for action alerts and find out what’s happening and what they can do to help.
On April 16, Mamakating’s Town Board (Board) Conducted a Public Hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) of the Town’s Draft Comprehensive Plan (CP)

Written Comments Were Accepted Until May 7 — BKAA Supports Most Board Recommendations But Has Concerns About Several

Paula Medley

At the April public hearing, Paula Medley testified on behalf of the BKAA. While she congratulated the Board on a CP reflecting most residents’ and stakeholders’ interests, she highlighted several remaining drawbacks.

• Though steep slopes are now defined as being 20% or greater, for purposes of determining density, steep slopes are considered 25% or greater. We strongly contend that the latter should also be designated 20% or greater.

• Resorts, small, medium or otherwise should not be permitted “as of right” on the Shawanga Lodge property off Exit 114 of Route 17/86. This acreage is located in the town’s most restrictive zoning district, Ridge and Valley Protection, where resorts are otherwise prohibited. Why should the Shawanga Lodge tract be afforded special privileges, especially when the town’s hydrogeological study clearly indicated low water yields on the Shawangunk Ridge?

• Exit 113’s Economic Development Area is within the Basha Kill Watershed, so proposals there must mitigate negative environmental repercussions related to wastewater treatment, stormwater, and erosion/sediment controls.

Since the hearing, another concern was brought to our attention by BKAA partners Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy and Yankee Lake Preservation Association. Specifically, in the CP on page 41, under the heading “Lakes Communities”, it reads, “The Comprehensive Plan recommends that where land is available, development of water-dependent and water-enhanced uses along the lake shores, including boat docks, boat sales and rentals, Country Inns and Bed and Breakfasts, restaurants, golf courses and country clubs be encouraged but in a way that preserves the serene and natural appearance of these resources.” This inclusion directly threatens Mamakating’s ridgetop lakes (Yankee, Masten, Wolf, and Wanaksink).

(See accompanying Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy Letter and one by Yankee Lake family representative, Pat Huttenbach of Hirsch and Westheimer.) It also clearly impacts the Basher Kill, especially since the Pine Kill, emanating from Yankee Lake, flows into the Basher Kill. Consequently, like our partners, we urge the Board to reconsider page 41’s CP language.

Presently, the Board is reviewing the public hearing’s transcript and written correspondence. Subsequently, they will finalize the CP and hopefully vote on it shortly thereafter.

UPDATES

Paula Medley

Thompson Education Center (TEC)

TEC has not appeared before Thompson’s planning board since September, 2017. However, they continue sponsoring major Sullivan County events and touting contributions to non-profits like the Boys and Girls Club of Orange and Sullivan County.

In late May, 2019, an Associated Press reporter extensively interviewed Paula Medley about TEC’s current status and reasons for BKAA opposition, so media interest remains strong.

Paradise II — BREAKING NEWS...

Located at South Road’s northern end at a former bungalow colony/resort, a summer camp/school for adolescent boys will convene this year. Some history...In April, 2018, a congregation received conditional site plan approval from Mamakating’s planning board to operate. While this group eventually withdrew its application, another surfaced and, in January 2019, received an 18 month extension of the original conditional site plan approval. Since then, new camp operators obtained a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit from DEC and water usage one, primary conditions attached to planning board sanctioning. Since all requisite authorizations have been met, camp activities will commence sometime this summer.

Beautiful Earth (BE)

Apparently, BE developer, Lex Heslin, now owns the former Yukiguni Maitake site off McDonald Road. BE’s Phase 1, when, or if initiated, involves constructing 12,300 sq. ft. greenhouses.

There is nothing new to report on the following:

Hopper Hill Sand and Gravel Mine

7 Peaks
April 25, 2019

Town of Mamakating, Town Board
2948 Route 209
Wurtsboro NY 12790

Subject: Draft Comprehensive Plan - “Lake Communities”

Dear Councilmembers,

The Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy (RLC) is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization formed in 2018 with a mission “to protect and preserve the natural environment of the Shawangunk and Mount Prosper ridge top and surrounding areas by land acquisition and promoting conservation through educational programs and seminars.” In the furtherance of our mission, RLC aims to support, assist, and collaborate with existing environmental advocacy groups in our community and to build strength through unity among those advocating for the protection and conservation of the freshwater lakes in the Shawangunk and Mount Prosper region.

We, at the RLC, were disturbed to read the Mamakating comprehensive plan and find that it contains language that we feel will certainly result in eutrophication of our lakes. Your latest version of the Comprehensive Plan, contains a section on page 41, under the heading, “Lake Communities,” It reads, “The Comprehensive Plan recommends that where land is available, development of water-dependent and water-enhanced uses along the lake shores, including boat docks, boat sales and rentals, Country Inns and Bed and Breakfasts, restaurants, golf courses and country clubs be encouraged, but in a way that preserves the serene and natural appearance of these resources.”

These types of business would directly threaten the health of the Mamakating’s ridgetop lakes (Yankee, Masten, Wolf, and Wanaksink) both through eutrophication and through the threat of introducing invasive species into the lakes. Boat docks, boat sales and rentals would directly utilize the lakes and would encourage routine and frequent introduction of people and equipment — possibly outside boats — into these lakes. Such activity is highly risky for introduction of “hitchhiking” seeds and animals from other water bodies into these four pristine lakes.

Businesses such as Country Inns, Restaurants, Golf Courses and Country Clubs offer a different kind of threat to the health of the lakes. These types of business would require significant septic system usage, creating an increased flow of nutrients, and possibly effluent, into the lake, thereby further contributing to the eutrophication. They are also associated with application and maintenance of extensive grass and lawns, which are simply incompatible with natural lakes, directly causing eutrophication through run-off of both fertilizer and seed. It is worth noting that the fertilizer, whether natural, organic or otherwise, all creates the effect of eutrophication.

Eutrophication is “excessive richness of nutrients in a lake or other body of water, frequently due to runoff from the land, which causes a dense growth of plant life and death of animal life from lack of oxygen”. Obviously, avoiding eutrophication is essential to the life of Mamakating’s pristine ridgetop lakes. It is worth noting that eutrophication is a cause of algal blooms and thought to be related to hazardous algal blooms which are not only threats to supplies (See accompanying DEC Notice on Harmful Algal Blooms).

It is important to understand that while the Basha Kill can suffer invasives without directly threatening the Lakes, the same is not true in reverse. Anything introduced to the waters of the lakes, will assuredly end up in the Basha Kill. Thus, threats to the Ridgetop Lakes ARE also threats to the Basha Kill, one of the Town’s public environmental treasures.

On behalf of the RLC, I urge you to reconsider this language regarding Lake Communities. It is a direct threat to our Ridgetop Lakes.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Rogers
President
Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy, Inc.
Letter Voicing Yankee Lake Family’s Concern Regarding Mamakating’s Draft Comprehensive Plan

May 3, 2019

Via email: Townclerk@mamakating.org
and Regular U.S. Mail

Town of Mamakating, Town Board
2948 Route 209
Wurtsboro, NY 12790

Re: Yankee Lake concerns

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a lawyer living in Houston, Texas. However, my family (the Pattersons) has been going to Yankee Lake for over 100 years. My mother owns property on the lake. Her name is Muriel Patterson Huttenbach. I have many other relatives that own various property along Yankee Lake.

I am alarmed to discover that the draft Mamakating Comprehensive Plan contains a section that reads: “The Comprehensive Plan recommends that where land is available, development of water-dependent and water-enhanced uses along the lake shores, including boat docks, boat sales and rentals, Country Inns and Bed and Breakfasts, restaurants, golf courses and country clubs be encouraged, but in a way that preserves the serene and natural appearance of these resources.” This recommendation is a direct threat to the health of Yankee Lake and to its rural neighborhood.

This statement ignores what the townspeople identified as threat at the first public forum; “Advertising Out-of-Zone Activities (AirB&B)” and conflicts with its own recommendation that “these Neighborhoods retain their single family character.”

This clause is based on an assumption that the Lake Community “sustainability as residential centers, relies in large part upon their marketability to seasonal second-home communities and tourism.” The assumption is just not true. The value of these properties is NOT based on tourism. Quite the opposite. We have chosen Yankee Lake for one reason: Because it offers a private, peaceful, non-commercial, non-tourist environment. The LAST THING THAT WE WANT is to invite developers to buy up homes and property, convert them to businesses, and bring in strangers on a daily and weekly basis.

1. We have already suffered at the expense of unregulated AIR B&B type rentals, where homeowners operate commercial businesses in private residences.

2. Yankee Lake is privately owned. The Yankee Lake Preservation Association (YLPA), which owns the lake, prohibits commercial use of the lake. Misleading developers to believe otherwise, sets us up for lawsuits.

3. Most importantly, the businesses that you suggest, introduce an immediate threat to the health of Yankee Lake. These businesses typically involve expansive lawns, which require frequent fertilization. This fertilization on lake-front properties results in run-off of fertilizer residue into the lake, thereby resulting in increased growth of vegetation, including algae. Restaurants, Inns, and Conference Centers would require large septic systems, creating flow of nutrients and possibly effluent into the lake, further risking algae blooms. Algae blooms, especially Hazardous/Toxic Algae Blooms (HABs) are not yet well understood and are still being studied. They require that lakes be completely closed off to recreational use, they threaten the water, and adversely impact the health of residents and wildlife. Such an HAB at Yankee Lake would most assuredly infect the Basha Kill, as well (See DEC HABs, page 32).

We, at Yankee Lake, are diligent in working to protect the water quality and health of our pristine lake. We are alarmed at the recommendation in the Comprehensive Plan and strongly urge you to delete it in its entirety.

Yankee Lake is a relatively small lake, and is perfect for many family activities. I learned how to fish, row a boat, pick blueberries, sail a sailboat, and do many other activities at Yankee Lake. I bring my three kids and wife every year to Yankee Lake. My kids are 9, 13, and 17 years old. During my time at the lake summer of 2018, my kids leave behind their electronics and go fishing, use row boats from my mom’s property all the way to the island. My sons continued learning how to sail a small Sunfish sailboat. These memories are priceless.

Consequently, I would hope that there would be no environmental impact on the lake. I have concerns about light pollution, noise pollution, and due to possible waste products filtering into Yankee Lake. I know the waters of Yankee Lake flow through many other communities. I would hope that to the extent that development is allowed to proceed, all concerns would be addressed and monitored and supervised. I would hate to have construction begin and problems develop. I would also hate to have construction finished and the overall impact on the area be devastating to Yankee Lake and the surrounding communities.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any other questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Hirsch & Westheimer, P.C.

By: William “Pat” Huttenbach
Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

What are Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)?
Most algae are harmless and are an important part of the food web. Certain types of algae can grow quickly and form blooms, which can cover all or portions of a lake. Even large blooms are not necessarily harmful. However some species of algae can produce toxins that can be harmful to people and animals. Blooms of algal species that can produce toxins are referred to as harmful algal blooms (HABs). HABs usually occur in nutrient-rich waters, particularly during hot, calm weather.

Keep reading to learn what to do if you spot a bloom. Click on the links below for more detailed information.

AVOID it!
Because it is hard to tell a HAB from non-harmful algal blooms, it is best to avoid swimming, boating, otherwise recreating in, or drinking water with a bloom.
Before you go in the water, find out what waterbodies have blooms or have had them in the past. DEC maintains a HABs Notifications page of waterbodies that currently have blooms. Please note that if a waterbody is not listed, it does not mean that it does not have a bloom. It may have one that was not reported. Find out what waterbodies have had blooms in the past on the HABs Archive page.

- People, pets and livestock should avoid contact with any floating mats, scums, or discolored water. Colors can include shades of green, blue-green, yellow, brown or red.
- Never drink, prepare food, cook or make ice with untreated surface water, whether or not algae blooms are present. In addition to toxins, untreated surface water may contain bacteria, parasites or viruses that could cause illness if consumed.
- People not on public water supplies should not drink surface water during an algal bloom, even if it is treated, because in-home treatments such as boiling, disinfecting water with chlorine or ultraviolet (UV), and water filtration units do not protect people from HABs toxins.

If contact occurs:
- Rinse thoroughly with clean water to remove algae
- Stop using water and seek medical attention immediately if symptoms such as vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, skin, eye or throat irritation, allergic reactions or breathing difficulties occur after drinking or having contact with blooms or untreated surface water.

Be prepared:
Before you go in the water, find out what waterbodies have blooms or have had them in the past. DEC’s HABs Notifications page of waterbodies that currently have blooms. Please note that if a waterbody is not listed, it does not mean that it does not have a bloom. It may have one that was not reported. You can find out what waterbodies have had blooms in the past on the HABs Archive page.

REPORT it!

- If you suspect that you have seen a HAB, please report the bloom to the DEC. Fill out and submit a Suspicious Algal Bloom Report Form (PDF, 764 KB). Email the completed form and, if possible, attach digital photos (close-up and landscape to show extent and location) of the suspected bloom to HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov.
- Please report any health symptoms to NYS Health Department at harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov and your local health department (link leaves DEC website).

Marine Algal Blooms
HABs can form in marine waters, producing marine blooms and a variety of biotoxin events that occur off the coast of New York and other eastern and coastal states. The DEC Bureau of Marine Resources has a Marine Biotoxin Monitoring Program to search for the presence of toxin-producing marine algae (Alexandrium and others) and to detect marine biotoxins in shellfish, such as clams, mussels and oysters.

More about Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs):
- Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Action Plans - Harmful Algal Bloom Action Plans for specific waterbodies identify actions to reduce sources of pollution that cause HABs.
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Photo Gallery - Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) photo gallery
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Notifications Page - Map and information about waterbodies that currently have a HAB.
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Archive Page - Archived reports of waterbodies that had a HAB.
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) FAQs - Answers to frequently asked questions about harmful algal blooms
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Additional Information - More information about HABs topics such as swimming, drinking water, fishing, animal exposure, prevention, and the DEC HABs program.
On April 10, a “packed house” of 200+ attended a public hearing before Deerpark’s planning board on DS proposed enlargement of its 393 acre Deerpark campus. 48 speakers, mostly opposed to DS plans, addressed building a huge wastewater treatment plant, discharging 100,000 gallons of treated effluent per day into a Basher Kill tributary, adding a 30 room residence hall, 12 gazebos, 72,800 sq. ft. music hall, 15,600 sq. ft. rehearsal hall, and parking garage with 1,098 car and 40 bus spaces. BKAA consulting engineer Andy Willingham excellently highlighted wastewater treatment, stormwater, and safety in the allotted 3 minutes. While the hearing was closed, written testimony was accepted until Wednesday, May 8, 7 p.m.

(See Part I of Delaware Riverkeeper Network’s Remarks and River Reporter Editorial).

At Deerpark’s board meeting on May 8, town engineer Al Fusco, Jr. requested a Supplemental EIS from DS as sewage treatment, stormwater, traffic, water usage, and fire safety capacity were inadequately addressed in the DEIS. Thereafter, the board approved Mr. Fusco’s recommendation. Since there is intense public interest in DS, oral and written testimony undoubtedly will be accepted as part of the EIS process. It may be a while, however, before this document is completed.

IT’S BACK!!! Resurfacing during the board’s May 22 session, was Falun Gong’s reconfigured submission from several years ago, featuring commercial and residential units, like a mall with living areas, to be sited on 8 acres at 491 Galley Hill Road. This proposal is in the pre-application stage, so changes may occur, but present plans indicate 3 separate buildings, containing 21,200 sq. ft. for commercial uses, with 21 apartment units above the stores and 120 parking spaces. This is a suburban strip mall, usually located in more populated areas possessing necessary water, sewer, and fire/emergency services rather than in a rural residential district with narrow roads and minimal infrastructure.

This property’s topography is very sloping and wooded, with 3,000 sq. ft. of wetland. Currently, it is uncertain whether existing surface streams drain into the Basher Kill. Engineer Andy Willingham’s examination of this issue will determine BKAA actions. Rest assured, the BKAA will closely monitor this scenario.

Celebrating community action, DRA will host a fundraiser, Trout/Barbeque Shindig on Friday, June 21, 6 p.m., at D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville. Entry donation is $25 per person. The BKAA urges members and friends to attend and support DRA’s critical efforts. Reservations are necessary. To make them, contact Grace Woodard directly at (646) 644-3726 or email gfwoodard@gmail.com.

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 Basha Kill Area Association. Enclosed is:

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

Please make checks payable to: Basha Kill Area Association

Name ___________________________________________ Phone ____________________________

Address ___________________________________________ Email _____________________________

(for action alerts)
Residents Anger at Wealthy Cult Justified

(Forward from a column in the River Reporter, April 18-24, 2019.
Reprinted with their permission.)

Planning board meetings often draw a few citizens who have strong opinions about what should or should not happen regarding land use in their neighborhood. The 600 or so people who turned out to a meeting of the Town of Deerpark Planning board on April 10 to sound off about the expansion plans of Dragon Springs Buddhist LLC, (DSB) in rural Cuddebackville had stronger opinions than most.

It was hard to know if they were more angry at the DSB and its sprawling cultural, religious and educational center, or the local officials who allowed the organization to build structures without permits, repeatedly pollute a local trout stream and otherwise ignore local laws.

One person testifying said to the members of the planning board, “You work for us.” Another said, “Do your job.” Both were met with thunderous applause.

One man who worked for a cement company near DSB said his first encounter with the place seven years ago, “scared the hell out of me. I was met at the gate by a man carrying an AK47. That is nothing we need in our community.”

DSB is, among other things, the training center for six groups of dancers that travel the world with a Chinese dance performance called Shen Yun. The television ads for the shows are ubiquitous, and funded through local Falun Gong (also known as Falun DaFa) organizations who pay for them in many cities around the world. Some 96 performances are planned in the U.S. this year.

Are the ads or the performances any good? Here’s what New Yorker writer Jia Tolentino had to say: “The ads have to be both ubiquitous and devoid of content so that they can convince more than a million people to pay good money to watch what is, essentially, religious-political propaganda—or, more generously, an extremely elaborate commercial for Falun DaFa’s spiritual teachings and its plight vis-à-vis the Chinese Communist regime.” (www.bit.ly/TRRnewyorker).

Falun Gong was founded in 1992 by a Chinese national named Li Hongzhi who called it a “system of mind-body cultivation.” A few years later, Li was spreading Falun Gong outside of China. By 1999 the organization claimed 100 million adherents worldwide, and, that same year, China began a serious crackdown on the organization in that country.

Persecution by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is one reason, supporters will tell you, DSB needs to be protected with AK47s. DSB also says the CCP persecution extends to their efforts to spread the beauty of ancient Chinese dance through Shen Yun. The website says the CCP had a habit of sending dance troupes of its own to compete in the same cities with the Shen Yun performances, and CCP officials further contacted theaters around the world urging them not to sign or to break contracts with Shen Yun.

Nevertheless, it’s clear that DSB, Shen Yun and Fulon Gong now have pretty deep pockets, and the activities of these groups converge in the sprawling facility in rural Cuddebackville. Perhaps it is wealth that convinced the powers that be that they need not be overly concerned with local zoning laws. Build whatever you want, pay a few fines and move on. The nearby residents, however, are not happy.

In June 2014, DSB settled a lawsuit with the Town of Deerpark, and one of the stipulations was this: “Dragon Springs shall, to the extent required under the Zoning Code and all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations, apply for and obtain any and all permits or approvals as may be required by law for such changes or expansions before undertaking same.”

But the powers that be either did not understand that condition, or simply decided they could ignore it. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for plans to greatly expand this facility admits that, since signing the agreement that ended the lawsuit in 2014, DSB has built various structures without planning board approval.

Further, DSB has violated permits time and again by allowing plumes of mud to flow into a trout stream that empties into the Neversink River. One resident at the hearing said to the members of the planning board, “You need to get a handle on this, you need to follow the zoning laws, follow the town planning, because I’ve read the town planning and there’s a lot in there about protecting the rural character of this area.”

To this point, DSB has done a truly awful job of following state and local zoning and environmental laws, and it’s disrespectful to their neighbors and their community. Local officials have not done much better.
Delaware Riverkeeper Network’s Comments on Dragon Springs’ Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Site Plans Part I

April 4, 2019

Town of Deerpark Planning Board
PO Box 621
420 Route 209
Huguenot, NY 12746

RE: Dragon Springs Buddhist Inc.
(Section 31, Block 1, Lot 31.22) Site Plan

Dear Planning Board Members:

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), supporting documents and appendices, and the site plans for the Dragons Springs Buddhist Inc. proposal to expand their facilities located at 140 Galley Hill Rd, and situated between Galley Hill Rd, and Guymard Turnpike. The DEIS is incomplete and inaccurate, failing to represent site conditions for major environmental features, and inaccurately describing the significant environmental impacts that will occur with the proposed development. A full and complete evaluation of the environmental impacts from the proposed development is therefore not possible with the information presented by the applicant thus far.

That being said, from the information provided, we can clearly establish that the proposed development would result in significant and substantial adverse environmental effects, particularly impacts associated with surface waters and wetlands, and the living resources dependent on these waterways. As such, it is clear that the Town Planning Board must deny requested approvals for this project.

The magnitude of the proposed development and its environmental footprint is massive when considered in the context of the resources to be harmed. The project as proposed will transform a formerly forested headwater site with over 60% steep slopes into an industrial footprint with towering structures, nearly 10% impervious cover and a large wastewater treatment plant, with entire wetlands being totally eliminated. The irreparable loss of sensitive forested and wetland resources on-site demonstrates a failure to plan development activities appropriate to the setting. Approving just one of the proposed elements in such a setting would be environmentally risky, and would likely induce significant environmental impacts even with the most responsible landowner and the most advanced development, stormwater, and wastewater practices and technologies. In this instance, the Town of Deerpark is being asked to approve a suite of individually risky endeavors that collectively could be devastating for the local stream, the Basher Kill, the Neversink River, and the entire community of Deerpark. In addition to the inappropriate scope of development and the failure to use best practices to minimize environmental harm, Dragons Springs Buddhist Inc. (“Dragon Spring” or simply “the applicant”) has consistently flaunted rules and regulations, particularly environmental regulations related to stormwater runoff and sediment control. This clearly elevates the risks, and increases the likelihood that significant environmental harm will result.

Given the known and substantial adverse environmental effects, and the fact that Dragon Springs has failed to candidly characterize site conditions and additional environmental impacts, this development proposal must not proceed. The Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN) offers our comments and review as a contribution to the SEQR process and as a contribution to the public hearing comment record.

Context for Review

The proposed development expansion on the Dragon Springs site includes a long list of major and minor additions, modifications, and already-constructed facilities, including:

- 3.0 acre parking garage, up to 74 feet in height, built into a steeply sloping hillside;
- 1.6 acre music hall on the northeastern corner of the property;
- 0.6 acre concrete plaza on the northern edge of building complex, adjacent to rehearsal hall;
- 0.2 acre statue work shed on the western edge of the property perched above steep slopes;
- new rehearsal hall (already partially or completely built);
- new dam and new impoundment on perennial stream (prior permits have expired and are no longer valid);
- numerous smaller structures and buildings, both new and modified;
- new and expanded roadways;
- increases in impervious surface by 11 acres;
- total land disturbance of 41 acres;
- 30 acres of tree clearing, with just small fraction of trees replaced in the landscape plan.

We are fully aware, and the public record demonstrates, that Dragon Springs is seeking after-the-fact approval for elements of the proposal that have already been totally or partially constructed without necessary reviews, approvals and/or permits. It is wrong to reward this behavior by granting approval after-the-fact. By approving these already constructed elements you will be encouraging Dragon Springs to continue their reckless and irresponsible development practices.
Springs and others to pursue this same development strategy - let me build it first and secure approvals later because government is unlikely to require me to tear down that which has already been built. The fact is that this project should not be approved as proposed and certainly not in the absence of understanding what the full development being proposed/pursued actually is (i.e. this most recent proposal is simply a segment of a larger project that has not been disclosed to the public, regulators or local officials). In addition, it is very likely that regulators and decisionmakers would like to see alterations in the elements already constructed which cannot now be fully or fairly considered if the current, unpermitted construction is allowed to remain.

It is bad public and/or legal policy to reward unpermitted construction with after-the-fact approval. It will incentivize this kind of illegal conduct by the applicant and others and simply cannot be tolerated. Dragon Springs must be required to de-construct all unpermitted structures on their site in order to allow for full, fair and legal review of whether this construction should be allowed and/or if it should be allowed as proposed or with appropriate modifications.

In addition, a review of the public record demonstrates that the Dragon Springs development continues to expand and will likely seek additional approvals for further expansion in the future. It seems clear from the connectivity between the development elements in terms of use, as well as their proximity in terms of time, timing, and location, that there is in fact a broader vision or project that is being pursued by Dragon Springs but is not being disclosed to the public or regulatory agencies for review and consideration. We have deep concerns that there is an intentional effort to segment this larger planned-for project into smaller segments as a means of evading appropriate legal review and regulation. Before any approvals are to be granted, it is vital that this kind of illegal conduct by the applicant and others and simply cannot be tolerated. Dragon Springs must be required to de-construct all unpermitted structures on their site in order to allow for full, fair and legal review of whether this construction should be allowed and/or if it should be allowed as proposed or with appropriate modifications.

In support of our position that the proposed project should be rejected and unapproved elements deconstructed, Delaware Riverkeeper Network provides this comment with respect to the most recent project that has not been disclosed to the public, regulators or local officials. In addition, the environmental review, public comment, and regulatory decisionmaking can be undertaken - it is inappropriate to allow the ongoing use of segmentation to evade full and appropriate public consideration, and legal review and decisionmaking.

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Excessive Development of Environmentally Sensitive Land

The proposed expanded development at the Dragon Springs site fundamentally exceeds the ability of this site (and surrounding areas) to absorb and ameliorate the environmental stresses introduced by such high-density urban development in an environmentally sensitive setting. The property is dominated by steep slopes (over 60% of the site is 10% or greater in slope6), headwater streams, mature forests, and forested wetlands. In such settings, environmental impacts more quickly accrue and are more difficult to address. Of major significance, the generation of stormwater runoff becomes particularly problematic, and the extraordinary attempts to manage this stormwater runoff both fail to prevent damage and cause significant damage of their own. As described throughout our comments, the size and scope of the proposed development creates environmental impacts that cannot be reduced, managed, or mitigated. Each of the major components in the proposed development, in this sensitive environmental setting, represents significant environmental risk. When combined together, these individual risks become a major threat to the local and regional environment, even under the most responsible management. Yet as the record clearly demonstrates, the applicant has consistently failed to obtain necessary approvals or, once obtained, adhere to the requirements that would prevent environmental pollution of the site and the surrounding resources. The proposed development simply exceeds the capacity of this site to withstand these environmental threats, and these impacts are compounded by a proven track record of poor compliance.6

On this site, with a predominance of steep slopes, the applicant proposes an additional 11 acres of new impervious surfaces and new disturbance of 41 acres in addition to the extensive disturbance of the site for previous development over the last 20 years. The applicant acknowledges that 25% of the 41 acres of disturbance will be on the steepest slopes (>15% slope).7 The proposed expansions in the developed footprint will bring the total impervious cover to 36 acres, or nearly 10% of the 393 acre property (9.2%). This is too much impervious cover for the site, and will cause local and regional impacts from the runoff generated for this dense impervious footprint. Even in settings with gentle topography and deep soils, the scientific literature recognizes that a 10% impervious coverage will cause significant environmental impacts, including water quality degradation, losses of biodiversity, channel instability, and sediment pollution.8 With such well-documented impacts in less extreme and less sensitive environmental settings, the proposed 9.2% impervious coverage here at the Dragon Springs site is an unacceptable proposal that, in this setting, will result in environmental impacts far greater than such a development density would cause in an area with gentle slopes, deep soils, and less sensitive environmental resources. Here at the Dragon Springs site, the nearly 10% impervious coverage and the clearing of forests in a steep-slope environment will cause uncontrolled runoff across multiple locations, scour of soils and streambanks, pollution from impervious cover runoff, heightened sediment pollution of...
the streams and wetlands on-site as well as to the unnamed tributary to the Basher Kill, the Basher Kill itself, and the Neversink and Delaware Rivers. These impacts, at this density of development in this setting, cannot be avoided, effectively managed, or mitigated. The only way to avoid these impacts is to recognize the limitations of the site and to avoid the over-development of this steeply-sloping, forested, headwater setting. As the applicant’s history of violations clearly document, the environmental impacts are clear and predictable.

Despite these extraordinary challenges and the past history of problems, the applicant nevertheless has failed to recognize the magnitude of the challenges and has continued their superficial attempts at managing the environmental impacts. This can be seen in the preliminary Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) presented as Appendix D to the DEIS. Although the applicant has, at face value, attempted to model and control both the runoff volume, the runoff timing, and the water quality of the stormwater through a series of stormwater management practices, a careful review of these proposed measures shows they have not been properly designed. Among the many deficiencies, the applicant fails to provide details on stormwater planters for the music hall and parking garage A, yet claims these unspecified practices can fully manage stormwater runoff for over one acre of impervious surfaces. They likewise claim credit for sheetflow through riparian buffers, but fail to recognize that the area has steep slopes up to 33% thus precluding sheetflow as a management practice, and likely exacerbating rather than managing stormwater runoff. The broader green infrastructure practices proposed by the applicant similarly fail to meet the required specifications in order to receive green stormwater credits, including demonstration of infiltration capacity on rocky soils with near-surface bedrock. The applicant also proposes three sand filters to treat over 10 acres of impervious surfaces, but provides minimal details of their design and operation, and even improperly sites these practices in areas such as those with moderate gradients (e.g., 12 foot drop for one sand filter).

Instead of recognizing the limitations of the site and the historic problems with stormwater runoff and pollution of local streams and rivers, the applicant treats the stormwater runoff as a conventional problem using generic solutions, and fails to either propose a scale of development that can be effectively managed or to invest in design and implementation of strategies that will appropriately scale with the magnitude of the challenges. These deficiencies have already caused significant environmental harm in the Town of Deerpark and to the resources of New York state, and will expand these harms in frequency and magnitude should the proposed over-sized development be approved.

One of the applicant’s solutions to the over-development of this site, and to the high volumes of stormwater runoff, will itself cause significant environmental impacts. In order to control and model stormwater runoff (both volumes and peak rates) to demonstrate no increases post-development, the applicant has already constructed one dam and proposes to construct a second dam to impound water on the site. This proposed second dam is particularly problematic, both in terms of its design and in terms of its environmental impacts (see detailed review of impacts below). Importantly, the main function of this proposed dam and the proposed excavation of over 100,000 cubic yards from land within the proposed impoundment will be stormwater management. Yet this stormwater management practice will be developed over an existing 5.2 acre wetland, and will permanently inundate a class C (TS) trout spawning headwater stream. In this case, the applicant is proposing a significant site development (a new dam and impoundment, far exceeding the previously approved but expired permit for a smaller dam on the site) in order to manage stormwater, but has chosen to sacrifice some of the most important and sensitive environmental resources on the site in order to manage the large volumes of stormwater created from this large-scale development. Again, the size of the development exceeds the capacity of the site to absorb the new activity without sizable and significant environmental impacts.

**Expanded Wastewater and Stream Discharge Pollute Local Streams & Rivers**

The excessive expansion of the Dragon Springs facility in this sensitive environmental setting leads to a significant increase in wastewater flows and thus the need to expand a wastewater treatment plant, and to discharge wastewater effluent directly into local streams and rivers. The size of the facility, its location on a small trout stream, the permissive effluent limits, and the combined effects with the many other stream alterations will impair the best uses of the receiving stream and will likely remove both Designated Uses and Existing Uses from the tributary, the Basher Kill, and the Neversink River in violation of state and federal laws and regulations.

The applicant plans a 10-fold expansion of wastewater flows as a result of the over-development of this forested headwater property. Shifting to an industrial-scale development of the property requires a shift away from the environmentally-sensitive discharge-to-groundwater currently employed (8000 gpd current flow) to a major wastewater treatment plant with a design capacity of 100,000 gpd (gallons per day). A 10-fold increase in wastewater flows reflects the magnitude in the increased use and the impact of the proposed development. As other reviewers have highlighted, a facility this large is equivalent to a 500-home single family residence development.

Although routine permitting by NYSDEC and DRBC has established conventional effluent limits for this facility, a closer examination of the impacts to receiving streams clearly demonstrates the gross pollution that will result from
this major wastewater plant discharging to a small local trout stream. The unnamed tributary to the Basher Kill that will receive wastewater effluent is a small stream classified in New York standards as C (T), indicating best usages for fishing and the protections and water quality standards for trout populations.\textsuperscript{16} This stream has a drainage area of approximately 2.3 square miles near the wastewater treatment plant outfall and a 7Q10 wastewater mixing flow of just 0.04 cfs\textsuperscript{15} (cubic feet per second). Under design conditions for the wastewater plant and both typical and conservative assumptions for nutrients\textsuperscript{16} the resulting nutrient concentrations under low flow would increase to as much as 1.0 mg/L Total Phosphorus and 3.5 mg/L Total Nitrogen in this receiving stream. With recommended nutrient criteria for the state of New York between 80% to 99% lower than these concentration\textsuperscript{17} it is clear that the large size of this new proposed wastewater treatment plant and the high effluent limits currently proposed will lead to gross pollution of the unnamed Basher Kill tributary, will cause a host of eutrophication symptoms (including loss of biological diversity, excessive algal growth, and extremes in dissolved oxygen and pH) and will diminish or preclude the ability of trout to successfully persist in these wastewater-dominated sections of stream.

The effects from the 24 hours per day/7 days a week effluent will extend beyond this local trout stream, however, and will lead to further eutrophication of both the Basher Kill and the Neversink River. Based on New York recommended standards, the Neversink River already far exceeds recommended eutrophication criteria for Total Phosphorus\textsuperscript{16}, and the dramatic declines of threatened and endangered mussel species in the Neversink River in recent years suggests that the ecological integrity of this system has been significantly compromised and cannot withstand expanded pollutant loading. Indeed, as described below, the addition of a significant wastewater treatment plant to the Neversink River system, particularly in such close proximity to the species’ highest density patches, may lead to substantial impacts to threatened and endangered mussels, including the possibility of extirpation of the last strongholds of these species in New York state.

Finally, it is important to note that the DRBC docket for this wastewater discharge has expired, and a new application and docket review will be needed for this wastewater treatment plant. DRBC review, input and docketing is critical information for the SEQR and decisionmaking process.

**Extreme Risks to Threatened & Endangered Species Underestimated by DEIS**

The current DEIS and supporting documents fail to recognize the risks to threatened and endangered species from the proposed development. In particular, the changes to water quality from both the addition of a new large wastewater treatment plant and the ongoing and proposed expansion of impervious coverage, stormwater flows, altered temperature regimes, and the resulting violations of sediment and turbidity water quality standards all will contribute to recent declines in multiple threatened or endangered species. In addition, the failure of the applicant to characterize on-site resources and habitats in all potentially affected areas means that these impacts have not been fully evaluated and cannot be understood based on the current submissions.

Recent declines in the state- and federally-endangered Dwarf Wedgemussel (Alasmidonta heterodon) in the Neversink River (the only population of this species entirely in New York state waters) raise alarms that this species is struggling to maintain its populations under the various stresses imposed on this Neversink population. Declines by up to 60,000 individuals in the 1990s were compounded by additional declines in the early 2000s such that the population is currently estimated at only 2000 individuals, an estimated 97% decline over the last 30 years.\textsuperscript{18} Adding both prescribed stress (continuous wastewater effluent) and unprescribed but well-documented stress (see regular violations via sediment, turbidity, and erosion over the last 10 years by the project applicant in Appendix A) could further the declines for this endangered species, perhaps resulting ultimately in the extirpation of this only unique population in the state of New York. Like the loss of spawning trout populations in the small tributary on-site cited as a risk in multiple locations of our comments, the loss of a federally-endangered species could result from the permitting of this extraordinary suite of risky development activities in a highly sensitive environmental setting, placing the Town of Deerpark, the State of New York, and the applicant in violation of the Clean Water Act, as well as state and federal regulations. The risk to struggling Dwarf Wedgemussel populations in the Neversink River is underestimated by the current DEIS, and the proposed extensive development of the project site must not proceed in order to reduce these risks of increasing harm. It is noteworthy, however, that some of these risks will continue even without the approval of the current proposed development because of a long history of poor stormwater management and sediment control by the project applicant.

Like the Dwarf Wedgemussel, the Brook Floater (Alasmidonta varicosa) has experienced severe declines both locally and throughout New York state in recent decades. Broadly within New York, most populations have either been extirpated or have declined to the point where few (if any) individuals can be found during surveys.\textsuperscript{19} The only relatively strong population remaining in New York has been the Neversink River population, but like the Dwarf Wedgemussel there have been major declines in this last-remaining stronghold for the Brook Floater, with declines of 38,000 noted during the 1990s and then additional declines reported during the early 2000s.\textsuperscript{20} The Brook Floater is particularly sensitive to the types of risks and threats posed
by the Dragon Springs development since it specializes in clean, low-sediment cool to cold streams and rivers. Given the history of regular and excessive sediment releases from the Dragon Springs site into the small tributary, the Basher Kill, and the Neversink River, and given the risky overdevelopment of a steep-sloped headwater setting, the risks of extirpation for the Brook Floater population may be as high or higher than for the Dwarf Wedgemussel population of the Neversink River. Again, the Town of Deerpark, the State of New York, and the applicant would share responsibility for state and federal legal violations that cause the further decline or loss of the Brook Floater population. The risky overdevelopment of this sensitive setting must not be allowed.

For both the Dwarf Wedgemussel and the Brook Floater, the DEIS minimizes the risks to these species, fails to recognize the long history of water quality violations, and ignores the combined and cumulative impacts from multiple stressors on these sensitive environmental resources. Because these two species of mussels, as well as the local wild trout populations, sit so precariously near the brink of extirpation, isolation of risks from any single activity and a complete failure to evaluate cumulative risk represents a failure of this environmental impact evaluation to consider the high likelihood of local or state-wide extirpation for one or more of these sensitive species.

Similarly, the incomplete mapping of wetlands and surface water features on the project site (see comments below) precludes an accurate and complete evaluation of potential impacts to Bog Turtle. The applicant’s consultant clearly states that the only area surveyed for candidate Bog Turtle habitat was in the proposed impoundment that will be flooded by the new proposed dam. Despite the fact that the applicant describes depressional features in both text and in maps, and even includes areas preliminarily mapped as wetlands on multiple site plans or drainage maps (see detailed comments below), there is no evidence that the qualified wetland delineator and Bog Turtle surveyor visited these areas of the project site despite the fact that they would be directly impacted by stormwater runoff from the proposed development activities. As highlighted below, the potential for significant environmental impacts cannot be fully evaluated because of incomplete, inaccurate, and misleading information provided by the applicant in the DEIS and supporting documents.

Finally, despite the close proximity of Bald Eagle nests to the property, the applicant has proposed tree clearing during the bald eagle nesting season. The applicant has failed to consider the full and integrative impacts of the various land and resource disturbances, and has therefore created a significant disturbance during the most sensitive period for Bald Eagle growth and recruitment.

1 see Appendix A
2 NYSDEC letter to Town of Deerpark professional engineer (Alfred A. Fusco, Jr., PE); April 10, 2018; Dragon Springs Monastery, DEC Facility ID 3-3328-00150, Response on Lead Agency and DEC Jurisdiction (signed by Rebecca S. Christ, Deputy Regional Permit Administrator, NYSDEC Region 3)
3 contradictory numbers provided in SWPPP and DEIS; 11 acres cited in SWPPP, page 7
4 contradictory numbers provided in SWPPP and DEIS; acres cited in SWPPP, page 7
5 Figure III-2 of DEIS
6 see Appendix A
7 DEIS, page 19, “Potential Impacts”
9 see Appendix A
10 see independent engineering evaluation of DEIS by Willingham Engineering, dated February 11, 2019; attached as Appendix B
11 Table I-1 of DEIS; pages 15, 28, 29, 30 of DEIS text; also see Appendix D, preliminary Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
12 Table I-1 of DEIS
13 see independent engineering evaluation of DEIS by Willingham Engineering, dated February 11, 2019; attached as Appendix B
14 6 NYCRR Part 815, Table I, Item 47, Waters Index Number D-1-12-1
17 see New York State Nutrient Standards Plan, revised July 7, 2011, available online at https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/statenutriestandards.pdf; see also Smith et al. 2013. Ecological indicators 29: 455-467; recommendations indicate protection needed at less than 20 µg/L for Phosphorus and less than 500 µg/L for Nitrogen
DRAGON SPRINGS continued from page 39

wedgemussel/, accessed March-2019 and April-2019


22 see Appendix A

23 Appendix E of the DEIS, Habitat Assessment, by environmental consultant Michael Nowicki from Ecological Solutions, page 9.