

# SHAWANGUNK WATCH

Spring 2004 Preserving Open Space in the Shawangunks Volume 9 #1

Friends of the Shawangunks & The Shawangunk Conservancy

## Awosting Reserve Update

The Gardiner Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has confirmed the town building inspector's determination that a sewage treatment plant would not be permitted in the proposed Awosting Reserve development. In a "Findings of Fact and Decision" adopted at its February 26 meeting, the ZBA stated:

*The ZBA has concluded that uses permitted by right in an ARR-200 District do not include single-family residences connected to a sewage treatment plant. The Town Board intended to prohibit single-family homes on central sewage in the ARR-200 by specifically allowing only one-family residences on septic systems.*

This finding followed lengthy public hearings, with oral statements from both the public and Awosting Reserve. Written comments were also made part of the record. Anticipating a lawsuit, regardless of how it decided, the ZBA had all oral comments transcribed for inclusion in the record of its deliberations. Friends of the Shawangunks General Counsel, Phil Gitlen of Whiteman, Osterman and Hanna, had submitted a letter to the ZBA in which he carefully defined the issues and the reasons why centralized sewage was not permitted. Phil also made an oral presentation at the ZBA meeting on December 18, 2003.

To nobody's surprise, Awosting Reserve has filed suit against the ZBA, alleging that the ZBA failed to perform its job properly. Friends and Save The Ridge, along with a number of abutting property owners, will intervene in the Article 78 proceeding on behalf of the ZBA. Phil Gitlen will handle the intervention, participating fully in the proceedings, to support the ZBA and its findings.

But to all of our surprise, on March 29, John Bradley walked into the Gardiner Town Hall and told the Supervisor that he had just fired Chaffin-Light "effective immediately," and that the Town of Gardiner was to deal with him. Awosting Reserve president, and New Paltz resident, Roger Beck, told the *New Paltz Times* this was not valid. Bradley considers himself to be the "managing member" of the Limited Liability Corporation partnership. But the partnership includes two other partners—Chaffin-Light and a group of individual investors. Beck said that two of the three partners must agree before any deal can be terminated. Bradley could not be reached for comment. What will he think of next? We can only guess. Is this the best-case scenario to tie up this ill-suited, and hopefully ill-fated, Shawangunk project for years to come?

*New Paltz Times* reporter Jim Gordon subsequently reported that "Jim Chaffin, one of the principals in the Chaffin-Light development partnership, originally hired to bring the project to fruition, said that no one partner has the unilateral right to fire another. And he said the dispute is now heading for arbitration, but that he does not consider his company to have been dismissed from the job.



photo by Hardie Truesdale

"John Bradley, who is apparently still the owner of the 2,600-acre parcel, said that Chaffin-Light's contract with the project expired as of March 27. He said he will seek to create a project more in line with his original vision of a conservation community." Gordon went on to report that both Bradley and Chaffin-Light want a central sewerage facility for the project, but since the ZBA ruled that this is not an allowable use, the February ruling "if it stands, could be a crippling blow to the concept of a large subdivision on the fragile slopes. But that issue may become moot if the partnership cannot resolve its differences, which became public when Bradley delivered a letter to the Gardiner town hall on April 5 stating that Chaffin-Light were no longer connected to the project."

According to Gordon, "Chaffin said the validity of the arbitration process has already been upheld by a State Supreme Court judge ruling in New York City, and said that as of now the partnership is intact and 'the arbitration subcommittee has been formed.'"

Bradley told Gordon that he is "misunderstood and has served as a steward of the Shawangunk Ridge since the early 1950s. And in the late 1960s, he began buying parcels under various corporate identities seeking to stitch together a cohesive fiefdom, which he said would be dedicated to show that man can live in harmony with nature and still develop the landscape.... 'I put together those 30-plus parcels over 30-plus years for good purpose,' said Bradley. 'I'm a conservationist. I'm not an environmental whacko.'"

Chaffin told Gordon that while they are now frustrated and disappointed, "I'm not sure John's behavior is foreign to folks in that community, he has a tendency sometimes to act unilaterally."

We await the next chapter in this ongoing saga and can only imagine that these new developments will be a further setback for this ill-conceived project. Friends of the Shawangunks and Save The Ridge are continuing to work actively. Things are changing from week to week, and it is best to read the *New Paltz Times* as reporter Jim Gordon has been tenacious and thorough in reporting the intricacies of this saga. 🏞️

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Southern Shawangunks	Page 3
Regional Planning	Page 4
Ancient Landmarks in the Gunks	Page 6

## Open Space Is Now “Open Space” and Was Open Space...

by Annie O'Neill

**FIRST THERE WAS THE ICE AGE**, and the end of glaciation about 12,000 years ago. Imagine ice one mile thick making its way slowly to Long Island. That final glacier pushed its way south, leaving in its wake the Shawangunk topography as we see it and try to grasp it today. Oh yes, I know that there were many intermediate changes—the Little Ice Age of the 16th and 17th Century; subtle movements—uplift, shifting, rockslides, fracturing, chattering; and that mess of rubble—stones tossed about, scoured, and finally coming to rest at the base of those cliffs we love to watch, to climb, to ponder. Geologists wondered whether those massive rocks were a “talus apron,” at first nestled up against the cliffs. Then after “incidents” occurred they moved, crept, slithered, and tumbled, finally coming to rest as a formidable moat-like barrier around the gleaming cliffs. It is a traversable barrier, but often it is steep and scary. Some geologists wonder whether the Millbrook talus is still moving. It can feel like a river of rock when you look from above. When you hike up toward it you realize that the talus slope is much more extensive than what can be seen from above. Those blocks, part of the two or more million cubic yards of rock scattered way down the slope, came to rest where some homes still struggle with fields of ancient stone. The big isolated boulders are called glacial erratics and came to rest far away from the heap.

**IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND** that the ridgetop could not support habitation—not with all that surface bedrock where only the most tenacious plants could take hold. The cliffs were a natural barrier to the ridgetop, and the talus and scree slopes were a mass of wild jumbled rock—not good for anything but burrowing animals, a resting place for lichens and mosses, and a safe haven for the more wary species. Seeds carried by birds dropped on dirt washed down by rains, so here and there Pitch pines rooted and pockets of vegetation grew up. But not the kind you would eat or be able to sell. Of course, the acid soil on the ridgetops and downslopes eventually supported berries, but that is a later chapter.

**AFTER THE INDIANS WERE BRUTALIZED** and forced out by colonizers (land grabbers), by patentees, and by the people they sold to, many subsistence farms cropped up. These lands were tilled as farmers eked out just enough to remain in the area until things started to change in the 19th century.

**BUT THANKS TO GLACIATION** there was a lot of land that couldn't be built on. That didn't stop 18th and 19th century farmers from heading up toward the steeper slopes to plant hay, clear fields for animals, and start toiling to remove the sheer quantity of conglomerate and shale from the land. But there was just so high they could go.

**A CENTURY OR TWO AGO** a very different landscape than the frozen plain a Native American might have first looked out upon would have been observed. If you stood atop Millbrook, or Paltz Point, you would have seen a vast patchwork of cultivated open space. Be a bird, and you would see the land divided up with rock walls, perhaps hedgerows, or tree-lined boundaries. No dense forests in the valleys. No places to happily bushwhack—just cultivated land upslope until it was impossible to work—where the sheer forces of nature created a natural wall.

**BY THE CIVIL WAR** the Shawangunk wilderness had been transformed and cleared. It was all open space. If we jump ahead to 1869, the year the Smileys came to New Paltz and settled up on the mountain, we can imagine that their part of the “sky island” was surrounded by farms. Many of those farms were for sale. With the completion of a transcontinental railroad people were eager to head West. They started to abandon their poor rocky farms in search of opportunity and “open space.” And so the Smileys slowly assembled 400 properties to buffer their mountaintop resort. Some of those farms supplied the Mountain House with poultry, eggs, milk, beef, boar, pork, and other produce. Hay was mowed for horses and wood cut for fireplaces. As transportation from other markets improved the farms became fallow and

important as buffer lands. These lands could allow the creation of long carriage trails to ridgetop and valley destinations. Early hiking trails were often mowed paths through farmland similar to today's route across Glory Field on the eastern slope or the trails created through Spring Farm's many fields on the northwestern side of the mountain.

**OLD PHOTOGRAPHS REVEAL** an unrecognizable valley landscape. Today, look out from the many vantage points created by the Smileys in their “aesthetic forestry” phase, and you see trees. These heavily wooded areas deceive us. We want to think “wilderness.” And yet we know it is just overgrown farmland. Today we call it “open space.” Much of the land we hike through has grown into what looks like mature forests, but in reality much has withstood the ravages of repeated timber harvesting, of industries that destroyed much of the virgin hemlocks for bark for tanning, and cutting for charcoal making. What we think of as our “pristine” woods are often second or third growth forests. There are areas that were reforested as pine plantations in government-sponsored programs. Our much-loved land preserves are full of invasive species: the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*); Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), and a host of other plants like purple loosestrife, multiflora rose, thistle, Asiatic bittersweet, and *Phragmites australis*—a common reed once used to thatch gazebos. These plants take hold and don't let go. In the Sam's Point Preserve they are undertaking a species control plan. These invasives can crowd out native species in their quest for open space to propagate.

**WE ARE SO FORTUNATE** that our Shawangunk cliffs, crevices, and steep slopes made development so difficult. We started with a good base of “open space.” The ravines that are so common here also made development in the core Shawangunk area impossible.

**BUT I KEEP WONDERING** when did all the open space become “Open Space”? I called Tildy La Farge, Open Space Institute's Communications Director, to ask when that phrase came into use, and she said “my guess is that open space is such a vague term that it probably didn't come into being at a set date, like, for example ‘urban sprawl,’ which is a very distinct phrase coined by the late William H. Whyte (one of our original trustees) about half a century ago. Actually, in an article entitled ‘Urban Sprawl,’ Whyte talked a lot about open-space programs. So, the expression was definitely in use in the late 1950s. I have a feeling you may find that the term open space never really came into being on a specific date, but you can probably pinpoint the era in which it became a household phrase. I wouldn't be surprised if you found that Holly Whyte was one of those connected to the increased use of open space. A year after his *Fortune* article about sprawl, Whyte wrote an article about conservation easements that was first published in *Life* magazine and then republished in *Reader's Digest*. In this article he wrote: ‘What I have learned convinces me that there is one overriding consideration for any open space program. It is, simply, that open space must be sought as a public benefit. Open space is not the absence of something harmful: it is a public benefit in its own right, now, and should be primarily justified on this basis.’”

“The Open Space Institute founded in 1963, and originally named The Open Space Action Committee, was very much a reaction to a dynamite report about sprawl in the metropolitan area. That report was called ‘Race for Open Space’ and it was published by the Regional Plan Association (RPA) in 1962.”

Interestingly, Friends of the Shawangunks was also founded in 1963 in response to the potential degradation of prime ridgetop land with a Skyline Drive. And that was the beginning of the need to protect open space with more open space...!

*(This was inspired by a conversation with Bob Larsen about farmland in the Shawangunks. We will talk more about farmland in the next issue.)*

---

Annie O'Neill, an artist and Gardiner resident, is an avid Shawangunk explorer, climber, and the longest serving member of the Friends board.

# The Southern Shawangunks: A Guide to Protected Land South of Route 52

Friends of the Shawangunks traces its origins to the 1963 bill introduced in Congress to construct a skyline drive along the top of the ridge in New York, New Jersey (where it's known as the Kittatinny Mountains), and Pennsylvania (the Blue Mountains). In its early days, Friends was focused on what we now call the Northern Shawangunks, that portion of the ridge north of Route 52. This is the most dramatic portion of the ridge, the part that has attracted so many of us for so many years and the focus of the efforts to protect the ridge. Less well known—but no less important from an ecological point of view—is the Southern Shawangunks, extending from Route 52 to the New Jersey border.

Did you know there was a Shawangunk Ridge State Forest? Today it consists of 2,162 acres and extends from Route 52 to the Roosa Gap–Summitville Road, but it all started in 1888 with 200 acres going into the state forest preserve. Most of the land in this State Forest has been added in the last four years. The easiest way to understand its composition is to start at Route 52 and describe each parcel (identified by prior owner) as one heads south.

**Lands and Forests:** 1,285 acres, acquired by Open Space Institute (OSI) and Trust for Public Land (TPL) in 2000 and transferred to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in 2001.

**Howell:** 176 acres, acquired by OSI and TPL and transferred to the DEC in 2004. **Konstantinoff:** 350 acres, acquired by the DEC in 2003. **Stutzman:** 151 acres, acquired by New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and transferred to the DEC in 2003. **The original 1888 parcel:** 200 acres.

It is worth noting that four different organizations have been involved in protecting this segment of the ridge. If OSI is successful in acquiring additional lands under option, in contract, or in negotiation, the Shawangunk Ridge State Forest could grow to almost 3,300 acres.

And the effort doesn't stop there. To facilitate an examination of protection efforts on the remaining portion of the Southern Shawangunks, it will be broken down into three other segments: Roosa Gap–Summitville Road to Route 17, Route 17 to Otisville, and Otisville to the New Jersey border.

## Roosa Gap–Summitville Road to Route 17

Most of the ridge in this segment is administered by the DEC as the Wurtsboro Ridge State Forest, and consists of 2,300 acres acquired by OSI in the mid-1980s from multiple landowners. Late in 2003 OSI acquired another 150 acres from Wurtsboro Steam Laundry, a parcel now referred to as the “Bashakill Headwaters.” There is a gap just north of Route 17. OSI is in negotiation with several landowners along this section of the ridge. If it succeeds with all of these ventures, the Wurtsboro Ridge State Forest would contain 3,078 acres.

## Route 17 to Otisville

Very little land between Route 17 and Otisville is currently protected, but OSI is in various stages of acquiring a number of properties on this section of the ridge. Its goal is eventually to create a continuous band of protected land between Route 17 and Otisville. The Wurtsboro Steam Laundry parcel extends south of Route 17, and thus includes that portion of the ridge that would be impacted if Exit 114 of Route 17 is expanded to a cloverleaf when the road becomes Interstate 86. This expansion of the exit is meeting a lot of opposition, not the least from Friends of the Shawangunks. About 2,900 acres adjacent to this portion of the ridge constitute the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area. It's worth noting that another OSI goal—seeing the ridge from Mohonk to the Bashakill protected—is very close to being achieved.

## Otisville to New Jersey

This long stretch of the ridge is the lowest in the Shawangunk-Kittatinny-Blue Mountain Range, and thus threatened by encroaching development. At a minimum, it is hoped that a public trail corridor can be created on this portion of the ridge. In 2003 OSI and TPL purchased and transferred to the DEC 541 acres of ridge-top lands just north of Interstate 84. The Trail Conference (with assistance from OSI) is negotiating the purchase of several thousand additional acres in the area.

## The Future

Will it be possible to eventually have a continuous corridor of protected ridgetop lands along the entire Shawangunk Ridge, from Rosendale to the New Jersey border? The encroaching development at the very southern end of this ridge certainly is an obstacle, but who would have thought 10 years ago that so much of the ridge would be protected today?

## Marc B. Fried Leads Fundraising Hike for FOS in Witch's Hole Area

On April 17, local author, historian, and longtime FOS member Marc Fried led an all-day hike in the Witch's Hole Conservation Area. This 1,900 acre parcel in the town of Wawarsing was recently purchased by Open Space Institute (OSI). This spectacular piece of land connects with the northwest shoulder of the Sams Point Preserve and is soon to become a new addition to Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Although it has been traversed by people, and portions harvested by berrypickers, over the past two centuries, this area is in remarkably pristine condition. Marc, one of the Shawangunk's



cultural history experts, took hikers to visit historically significant spots. Jenn Cairo, FOS secretary, reported about the hike:

“Eleven of us ( Marc, some new FOS members, several longtime members, and I headed up from the OSI gate on Foordemore Rd., along the Mine Hole Creek on the remains of a jeep trail. Marc explained that the trail had been built by a previous owner to access a hunting cabin far up on the slope.

“Eventually we emerged from the hardwoods onto the slabs and pitch pine, blueberry, and sheep laurel vegetation so typical to the Ridge. From here we moved upslope. The group took in some fabulous views of the Catskills and Rondout Valley, especially from Panther Rock, a notable rock prominence about 5 feet high.

“From this old trail across the slabs, we came out near Four Mile Camp on the old Smiley Road, and the remains of the Addis store that supplied generations of summer berry pickers who moved up from Ellenville for the season. During lunch, Marc described the berry picker culture and showed us the remains of a four-way trail marker painted on a carriageway slab. Arrows lettered with ‘Awosting’ and ‘Kerhonkson’ were just discernible on the rock; without Marc it would have gone unnoticed!

“From the Smiley Road our route cut northwest across the slabs, this time to Pulpit Rock and Polish Creek, named by the berrypickers for the Polish family that lived near the headwaters. Some of us followed Marc on a detour — and cairn building exercise — to Healing Spring. Never known to go dry, the spring is nestled beneath a rock outcropping in dense mountain laurel. This had really been called Hank Green Spring in deference to a frequent visitor, but as he was a modest soul he promoted the name more commonly used today.

“We then followed a watercourse back down the slope, often wading in the stream bed, sometimes struggling through vigorous laurel. The stream eventually becomes the Little Stony Kill, with many little pools and spills along its length as it washes across a smooth slab bed. Only in one stretch, where the topography levels slightly and soils along the banks are deeper, does the kill channel itself and the laurels onshore get nearly impenetrable. On the lower stretches, the remains of a trail with teal blazes can be discerned among the laurel crowns along the southern bank. Finally, near the Ukrainian National Estate, we arrived at the crest of a dramatic waterfall, and then continued on to our cars.”

# Regional Planning Comes to the Shawangunks

by Cara Lee

The Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is composed of non-profit and public agencies, dedicated to protecting sensitive habitat and other natural resources of the Shawangunk Mountains. Informed by field research and scientific analysis, Partners manage over 40,000 protected acres of the Shawangunks, provide environmental education, and work with local communities to preserve open space on the slopes of the ridge. Its members are Cragmoor Association, Friends of the Shawangunks, Mohonk Preserve, The Nature Conservancy, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS Museum, NYS Natural Heritage Program, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation, Open Space Institute, and Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

One of the challenges in trying to protect the Shawangunks is that the ridge lies in a number of governmental entities with different master plans, zoning regulations, and development pressures. The entities in the Northern Shawangunks (north of Route 52) include the towns of Gardiner, Marletown, New Paltz, Rosendale, Rochester, Shawangunk, and Wawarsing. While it is a formidable undertaking to try to develop a consistent approach to ridge protection within all these entities, the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership, with support from the Tremaine Foundation, is exploring new partnerships and strategies to address this task.

Fortunately, a precedent for regional cooperation related to the Shawangunks already exists. For several years now representatives of these towns have been meeting to plan a Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway. The Scenic Byway program has provided a wonderful forum for local officials to share information—and a vision—for protecting open space in their communities, with the ridge as the logical, and breathtaking, “centerpiece.”

In a new program called Green Assets, the Biodiversity Partnership will be working with communities to integrate greater awareness of the ridge’s ecological values with local land use planning. The idea is that the same land that the Partnership has identified as important ridge habitat is probably also providing other “services” important to the community, such as views, recreational opportunity, protection of water sources, or agricultural value. Putting all the “services” or values together on a map is a key step toward designing planning tools that will meet shared goals of protecting what is most valuable to the communities, as well as the integrity of the ridge’s ecosystem.



## Message from County Legislator Hector Rodriguez

Hector Rodriguez (Democrat/Independent/Working Families) was elected in New Paltz last November and sent us this report:

As we start this New Year with a newly empowered Democratic caucus, issues of great environmental concern to New Paltz and environs may finally be addressed by our County Government. It is my intent, working with my legislative colleagues representing New Paltz and nearby towns, to put forward several proposals ranging from a Countywide Open Space Plan to protect our natural environment and resources, to proposals for affordable, senior and entry level housing for young families. I will also be working with other legislators toward purchasing wind energy as part of a renewable energy portfolio.

During the course of my campaign I spoke about how New Paltz was at the forefront of environmental protection, however many of our neighboring towns did not share this commitment. As a native of Southern Ulster County, I have seen so much farmland subdivided and many suburban style subdivisions dot our roadways.

My response was to consider ways to make the County more proactive in how we develop. I proposed to work with our legislative leaders to craft a Countywide Open Space Plan as a means of protecting our most sensitive environmental areas and also to coordinate the efforts of municipalities to preserve geographic features (the Shawangunk Ridge), rivers (the Wallkill, Esopus and Sparkill) and other defining natural features.

The Biodiversity Partnership’s Green Assets project offers planning expertise and detailed scientific information about the ridge to:

- Identify ridge areas that are top priorities for protection due to their natural, scenic, recreational, or open space value to their community;
- Meet with community-based Environmental Commissions, Open Space Committees, Planning Boards, Master Plan Committees, Farmland Protection Committees, and local residents to identify land protection goals;
- Make its GIS/ biodiversity data available to inform community-based natural resource inventories and land-use planning;
- Provide technical assistance to customize a “community tool kit” for open space protection;
- Help leverage federal, state, county, and private funding for land protection.

So far, the response to the project from ridge community representatives has been very positive and proactive. There is recognition that the window of opportunity for preserving the rural character of our region and protecting the biodiversity of the Shawangunks is an integrated challenge that is best addressed at a local level.

Cara Lee is Director of The Nature Conservancy’s Shawangunk Ridge Program.

The legislation directs the Ulster Environmental Management Council (EMC) and Ulster County Planning Department to coordinate the review and updating of the county’s open space and parks plan from the 1970s, develop a program to promote local municipal open space plans, explore the development of an open space fund and, for the first time, instructs the EMC/Planning Department to take into account bio-diversity, sensitive wetlands and eco-systems that transcend municipal boundaries. The legislation also directs the EMC/Planning Department to work with regional environmental groups and local citizens groups to identify key parcels.

With the energy from our Democratic caucus I expect Ulster County to become more progressive in its policies and more responsive as a government. I encourage all citizens regardless of their political persuasion or legislative district, to contact me should they have any questions, concerns, input or comments.

With your help we will make Ulster County a sustainable, proactive and wonderful place to live and work.

Hector Rodriguez worked as an intern for the only African-American in the Dutchess Country Legislature when he was 18. He has a BA in political science and international relations from Syracuse University and went on to intern in the White House and on Capitol Hill. He is a New Paltz resident. Hector can be reached at home (845) 255-6221 or via e-mail at hector\_s\_rodriguez@hotmail.com.



# A NIGHTMARE

by Keith LaBudde



I don't normally remember dreams. If I wake up once a year and recall a dream, that's a lot. But I had a dream right after the start of the year that has stuck with me.

First, a bit of background. In the early 1970s I went to Grand Teton National Park to climb. Among the mountains I climbed was Owen, a peak located just north of the famous Grand Teton.

I've always felt that Owen is what a mountain is supposed to look like, with a summit so sharp that only one person can stand on it at a time. The first party to attempt to climb it failed because they approached from the east, and the only reasonable way to the summit is a crack on its west side.

My partner and I approached from the west, climbed to a feature known as Gunsight Notch (it's a large slit between the Grand and Owen) and then climbed the bare south ridge of Owen to its summit.

Now, to the dream. In it I was approaching Gunsight Notch with a party of friends, only one of whom really registered: John, a doctor with whom I have climbed in a variety of places. As we reached the notch, I could look over to the north face of the Grand and see that it was coated with snow and ice. (Strangely, the climbing so far had been just on rock, but then dreams don't always make sense.) The ridge up to Owen was also icy. One of the party suggested that it would be easier going if we used the roof of a small building on the ridge. The alternative was an icy track along side this building, which I

decided to take. Both choices led to a building that turned out to be a restaurant filled with people. Going through this building led to another and another, all crowded with what obviously were tourists. More restaurants as well as gift shops finally led to just below the summit. Instead of having to climb the final crack, however, a covered stairway led to a Mohonk-like summerhouse sheltering the actual summit. I looked around me in amazement. In addition to all the buildings on the ridge and the sheltered summit, I noticed a carnival-like ride that was bringing tourists to and from the summit. Viewing this scene and recalling my first climb of Owen, I suddenly broke down and bawled. John tried to comfort me. End of dream.

I don't pretend to understand dreams, but the next morning, as I was remembering this one, the thought occurred to me: Save the ridge.

---

*Keith LaBudde is president of Friends of the Shawangunks and The Shawangunk Conservancy. He has recently become the first chairperson of the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition, an alliance of local, regional, and national organizations working to protect the Shawangunk ridge in Ulster, Sullivan, and Orange counties.*

## MISCELLANEA



photo by Annie O'Neill

**Thank you Marc B. Fried for leading our fundraising hike, and thanks for adding to Shawangunk lore and cultural history.**

## Thank You, Anonymous

Friends has received an anonymous contribution of \$3,000 that will be a big help in the Awosting Reserve fight. We would like to give the donor public recognition for this generous gift, but we can understand why he or she would like to remain nameless. Be assured, we do appreciate your gift.

## Needed, A Volunteer CPA

The Land Trust Alliance, of which The Shawangunk Conservancy is a member, will be requiring annual audits by a CPA. If you are a CPA and willing to volunteer your services for this task, please contact Keith LaBudde at (845)687-4759 or PO Box 270, Accord NY 12404.

## Did You Lose a Jacket?

A jacket was left behind at our Members Day meeting on October 26 at the Stone Mountain Center for Holistic Studies. If it's yours, you can recover it by calling (845)687-4759 or e-mailing us at gunks@hotmail.com.

## We Do Not Exchange Names

So many of you have indicated on your contribution slip that you do not want us to share your name with other organizations, that at its February 8 meeting, the board decided as a matter of policy to discontinue the practice.



## Mushroom Plant Update

The Yukiguni Maitake Manufacturing Corporation of America (YMMCA) will require three variances from Town of Mamakating Zoning regulations to proceed with its planned project for a 825,000-square-foot plant to produce and process 30 tons of mushrooms a day. The facility would be built on a 47-acre lot at the intersection of Route 209 and McDonald Road just north of Wurtsboro. The property adjoins both the upper reaches of the Basha Kill and the historic D & H Canal Linear Park. While town ordinances place a height limit of 45 feet, YMMCA proposes to build a plant that will tower approximately 65 feet, with utility structures 80 feet high. Try to visualize the impact of an 8-story building in the viewshed at the base of the Shawangunk Ridge.

YMMCA will also require a variance to permit it to cover 45 percent of the property; town code allows only 35 percent coverage. The third variance would allow YMMCA to reduce the number of loading docks at its facility.

Decisions on the requested variances are on hold, pending the completion of the State Environmental Quality Review Act review of the proposal. The Mamakating Planning Board is the agency that will take the lead in the environmental review. Friends of the Shawangunks will participate as an interested party.

# THE ANCIENT LANDMARK

by Norm Van Valkenberg

Most folks have at least a passing knowledge of natural selection, survival of the fittest, and all that other Darwinian stuff and also understand about creatures and plants having natural enemies put out there to keep things in balance. It's not so commonly known that land surveyors also have enemies, natural and otherwise. No, not the landowner who condemns the surveyor of the adjoining lot for taking some of his land. When that happens, it's usually because the complainant hasn't bothered to get his own survey and bases his knowledge of the boundary lines on what the previous owner told him when he bought the place and who got his information from the owner before him and so on and so on. The surveyor's enemies are the bulldozer and chain saw or, more particularly, those who operate these internal (infernal?) combustion menaces.

The bulldozer driver fixes his eye on the flatland surveyor, generally an older member of the species who picks and chooses his surveys carefully and doesn't take on anything more strenuous than house-lot subdivisions along with a few ball fields, tennis courts, and the like. As he goes merrily along setting precise lines of stakes this way and that, the bulldozer guy sits perched on his machine, motor idling, just waiting for the surveyor and his crew to pack up for the day. He then shifts into gear, lowers his blade, and lays waste to every stake in sight.

The chain saw operator is the bane of the deep woods, mountain surveyor, that rugged individual who's young in heart and spirit and wouldn't know a piece of level ground if he saw one. I count myself in this latter category, mainly because I served my novitiate in the Catskills where every boundary line runs uphill. This surveyor can easily be picked out of a crowd. He walks kind of tilted over to one side because his off leg is shorter than the other from many years of walking sideways across steep slopes. The chain saw guy doesn't wait in ambush for his prey; he's out there months or years ahead cutting down line-marked trees and leaving tangled tops right where the surveyor needs to run his transit line.

I've dealt with both of these adversaries and others too unsavory to be mentioned or, at least, the results of their handiworks. Here are the stories.

The corner I was looking for was described in an 1865 deed as "a stone standing on the southwesterly side of a spring." An earlier and well-respected surveyor had passed that way in January of 1940 and noted the corner in his fieldbook to be "a point on a slope of rock west of road." He came back that July and "set capped iron pipe in drill hole @ about 2' south of wire fence and about 7' North of base of fallen 16" Maple. Laid stones around pipe."

With all those directions, I anticipated a proverbial "walk in the park" when I set out to run the line that angled at the corner. But it wasn't. The corner was gone or, to be more truthful, I couldn't find it. I tried running a line in from both directions but that didn't work. To begin with, I couldn't find the back corner of the line coming in from the north. And nothing in the descriptions said just where on the road the beginning point was on the southeast. The spring was there all right but it was actually a wide wet area fed by a seep at the foot of a ledge. The fallen maple had turned to duff long ago. And, as usual in the Shawangunks, sloping rocks were all over the place and not one had a drill hole with a capped pipe set on it, in it, or beside it.



A couple of weeks after that, I went back for another try. The first time around I had noticed a few scattered stones that looked sort of suspicious beside one of those sloping rocks. Examining them more closely, I decided the stones hadn't grown that way. I moved them aside one by one until down in the dirt at the edge of the wet area, I uncovered a corroded six-inch length of pipe with a cap. The remainder had rusted away in the intervening fifty plus years. I hauled in some more stones from nearby, built a proper corner, and stuck the piece of pipe in the top.

A few years later while driving by on the road, I heard the fearsome roar of a bulldozer off in the woods. Sure enough, there it was tearing up the landscape building a road where one didn't belong. That part already constructed had hit the corner dead on. The stones and the capped piece of pipe were gone, probably now a part of the base of the road. The sloping rock had been blasted to smithereens and the seep was filled in. Such is progress.

The northwesterly corner of the Nineteen Partner Tract is—or, more correctly, was—a real antique treasure. The 1799 map of the tract said it was "A double black oak beging of 19 part<sup>er</sup> Tract." (see photo) The description in the partition of the tract dated the same year called the corner "a double Black Oak Tree marked with three notches and a cross over them standing at the Edge of a hill."

On an earlier survey I had found the southwesterly corner of Lot 1 of the tract and noted the northwesterly line was marked, in part anyway, by a stone wall. The double oak was a corner in the line of Lot 8 some 76 chains (nearly a mile) away and the point of beginning of a survey I was to start work on.

To be sure, I had the right tree—or the right point to begin from; after all, I didn't expect to find the tree after all those years—I decided to run a rough compass line out of the Lot 1 corner. The stone wall continued intermittently all along the tract line and I had no trouble following it as I chained lot after lot. When I neared the last few chains of the total distance, I was surprised to see a massive double oak tree up ahead. It stood at the brow of a hill and at the point of intersection of the stone wall I had been following with another running off to the southwest. I was thrilled at finding what I supposed was the original corner tree and started the traverse of my survey without taking time to look for the "three notches and a cross over them" that had first marked the tree those many years ago.

That oversight bothered me and I later decided to visit the site again for the express purpose of looking for those original markings. As things turned out, it wasn't until four years later when I found time to go back to the tree. I had waited too long; a logger on the adjoining lot had gotten there before me.

He had dropped one half of the double tree and hauled it off to the mill leaving a scarred stump as testimony to his wanton disregard of history. The cutting of one boll of the tree had removed part of the support of the other and it lay profaned on the ground. I looked it over carefully, even crawling beneath it to look at the underside, but didn't find the old marks. They must have been on the part taken away.

continued on page 7

Some will say the bulldozer and chain saw are simply instruments of growth and we must expect some relics from the past to give way when the road to tomorrow is opened. Maybe so for some things but not for property corners. I certainly can't be characterized as a bible thumper but like all surveyors I hold a few verses near and dear to the heart of my profession. Here are a couple.

Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set . . . . (Deut. 19:14)

Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen. (Deut. 27:17)

In addition to being a surveyor's surveyor, Norm is the author of four mysteries: *Murder in the Catskills*, *Mayhem in the Catskills*, *Mischief in the Catskills*, and *Murder in the Shawangunks*, all published by Purple Mountain Press. This article is excerpted from *Old Stone Walls: Catskill Land and Lore* due out in early summer. Both of the incidents reported here occurred in the Gunks.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### JUNE 23 SUMMER SOLSTICE TRAIL RUN

#### A BENEFIT FOR FRIENDS OF THE SHAWANGUNKS & SAVE THE RIDGE



**When:** Wednesday, June 23.

**Check in and day-of registration** starts at 5 pm.

**Race starts** at 6:30 p.m.

**Where:** Minnewaska State Park Preserve

**Course:** 15K carriage trail run or 1.6 mile walk. This is a fabulous course and is part of the Grand Prix Onteora Runners series and the Shawangunk Runners series.

**Sponsored by:** The Shawangunk Runners

**Awards:** In all standard 10-year age groups

**Fees:** pre-registration fee: \$8.00

day-of registration: \$10.00

\$7 per car parking fee is charged by the Park

**To pre-register or for more information:**

**Contact:** Laurel at 845-224-7517 or laurelkrastel@msn.com

Lou (evenings) 845-687-2018

### WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

We need Mountain Bike and Water Station volunteers and various helpers. Please call Laurel Krastel if you can help with the race.

# Rethinking Habitat



## Backyard Conservation: Each parcel is part of the critical mass

Hatti Langsford

A sliver of upland forest is for sale adjacent to the New Paltz High School. While we build science labs so the kids can see nature in a jar or bus them to the nature we have safely sequestered behind "preserve" signs, our open space is eaten up by subdivisions, its scenic and habitat value lost at an alarming rate. Perhaps a group of interested parents could pool their resources to buy this little parcel and the field beyond so that the students could walk from their school to learn the names of the trees and the structure of the forest layers instead of staring at yet another "structure." They could sweep for insects in the field and marvel at the diversity of our planet. It is a tiny little forest, a fragment. The beauty and wildlife that drew me to this area is rapidly diminishing. The one thing I know is that the people who see these lots as vacant have vastly different American dreams than I do. My dream is to listen with my daughter to wood frogs from my backyard within walking distance from the hamlet of Gardiner. Another lot for sale on my road contains the last upland habitat for what I believe is the last breeding pool within the hamlet. I wonder if the Wood Frogs and Spring Peepers will call again this spring after houses were built in their habitat last year. I bet the kids in the village of New Paltz have already lost this. Did anybody notice? We lose the opportunity to learn about these creatures in an intimate way—the sheer pleasure of discovering something new. You can never get bored studying nature; a single lifetime is too short to understand it all. Mostly we lose the frogs, they are reason enough to pay attention, as any five-year-old can tell you. For solutions perhaps residents can pool their resources to protect some space in their own neighborhoods. Maybe town governments can make this kind of protection a priority. There is plenty we can do in our own yards: keeping our footprint small and allowing most of our property to revert to field, hedgerow and eventually forest; or more intensively to restore habitat by landscaping with native plants. My nightmare is western Long Island. Let's not let it happen here.

**The one thing I know is that the people who see these lots as vacant have vastly different American dreams than I do.**

Hattie Langsford is a writer, Mom, and Minnewaska State Park Preserve's educator

# PLEASE BE GENEROUS

## WE ARE STILL FIGHTING

### TO KEEP THIS VISTA THE WAY IT IS



Palmaghatt Ravine with Gertrude's Nose in the Distance  
Photo by Hardie Truesdale

### The battle to save the ridge costs a lot of money!

We still need to pay:

- Legal Fees
- Consultants and Experts: (engineers, geologists, hydrologists, traffic consultants, soil analysts, biologists, archeologists. The gist is that the -gists cost money)
- Printing costs

If you have expertise that you can help us with, please let us know.

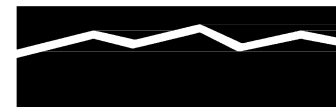
If you can organize a fundraiser, it will help us support this ongoing fight.



### From the camera of Jay Lorber

Hats off to Marc Fried, who is rarely seen without his famous hat.

The photo on the right shows the hiking group coming down the Little Stony Kill.



FRIENDS of the SHAWANGUNKS  
Preserving Open Space Since 1963

**Friends of the Shawangunks, Inc.** is dedicated to protecting the Shawangunk Mountains of New York from adverse environmental impacts.

**The Shawangunk Conservancy, Inc.** protects environmentally sensitive land in the Shawangunk Mountains of New York State.

Friends of the Shawangunks  
P.O. Box 270  
Accord, NY 12404  
845-687-4759

e-mail: gunks@hotmail.com

### Board of Directors

- Keith LaBudde, President,  
*Town of Rochester*
- Jennifer Cairo, Secretary  
*Town of Marbletown*
- Gary Jacobson, Vice-President  
*Town of Rosendale*
- Steve MacDonald, Treasurer  
*Town of Marbletown*
- Annie Mardiney  
*Town of Rosendale*
- Tom Nozkowski  
*Town of Marbletown*
- Annie O'Neill,  
*Town of Gardiner*
- Maureen Radl, Vice President  
*Hamlet of Cragmoor*
- Larry Randall,  
*Highland Falls*
- H. Neil Zimmerman  
*Town of Rochester*

Phil Gitlen, *General Counsel*



## YES, I want to help Save the Ridge!

- q This is a new membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- q Hero/Heroine (\$1,000 and up) \$ 500.
- q Champion \$ 250.
- q Ardent supporter \$ 15.
- q Individual membership \$ 25.
- q Family membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Shawangunks* or *The Shawangunk Conservancy*.

Contributions are tax-deductible.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- q This is a change of address.
- q This is a gift membership from: \_\_\_\_\_

We do not share your name with other organizations.

Matching Grants: If the organization for which you work has a matching grant program, just send us the forms and we will do the rest. Thank you.


IBM matches should be made to *The Shawangunk Conservancy*.

### Friends Newsletter

Design, editing, and production:  
Annie O'Neill

A copy of The Shawangunk Conservancy's latest financial report may be obtained by writing to the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271, or by writing to The Shawangunk Conservancy.

*Special thanks once again to Hardie Truesdale for photographs used in this issue. We also thank the New Paltz Times reporter Jim Gordon.*

 Printed on recycled paper

© 2004 Friends of the Shawangunks

Mail contributions to: *Friends of the Shawangunks*, P.O. Box 270, Accord, NY 12404