

SHAWANGUNK WATCH

Fall/Winter 2011 Preserving Open Space in the Shawangunks Volume 16 #2

Friends of the Shawangunks & The Shawangunk Conservancy

The Joppenbergh Project

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FRIENDS' CAMPAIGN TO SAVE JOPPENBERGH

This summer, when the town of Rosendale backed away from an agreement with the Open Space Institute to purchase Joppenbergh Mountain, it became clear to Friends of the Shawangunks that an important element in the preservation of the local environment was in jeopardy. Even though OSI was prepared to contribute \$100,000 toward this purchase, the town decided that it could not commit the remainder, \$85,000, to complete the sale. The Board of Friends of the Shawangunks voted to step up and offered, through their land acquisition affiliate, The Shawangunk Conservancy, to fund-raise and fill the gap. This project was formally announced at our annual Members' meeting in October. We met at the Rosendale Theatre, and afterwards two walks were led on Joppenbergh.

Here are some of the questions that were asked about the Joppenbergh Project.

WHERE IS JOPPENBERGH MOUNTAIN LOCATED?

Joppenbergh is located in Rosendale, NY where the Shawangunk Ridge crosses Rondout Creek. It is the most prominent natural landmark in the area. Roughly speaking, the south side of the mountain faces the Rondout and the Wallkill Valley Railroad trestle; the rail trail runs along Joppenbergh's west side and the Municipal Parking Lot lies to the east.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE MOUNTAIN AFTER IT'S PROTECTED? WILL THE PUBLIC BE ABLE TO USE IT?

Open Space Institute, Friends of the Shawangunks, Wallkill Valley Land Trust and representatives of other interested groups will develop and implement a management plan for low-impact public recreational use.

WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF THE VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS?

Open Space Institute negotiated the purchase price and funded 54% of the cost. Friends of the Shawangunks, through its land trust, The Shawangunk Conservancy, is raising 46% of the funds to complete the transaction. Ultimately the Wallkill Valley Land Trust will own and manage the property. All three organizations will participate in gathering public input and developing a management plan for the protection and recreational use of the Joppenbergh property. If you are interested in making suggestions for the management plan, you can email us at info@shawangunks.org and we will pass your ideas on.



WHAT'S UP THERE ANYWAY? WILL THERE BE TRAILS?

As you might expect of a dramatic landform located in the middle of a small community, Joppenbergh is laced with a network of old and often overgrown roads, paths and trails. The mountain's rich history is reflected in this network. Farming, logging, mining, recreational sports and communication technology have all had a place at different times—and each of these has left its traces. The management plan will include trails for public use.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF FOS HAD NOT AGREED TO RAISE THE \$85,000?

Open Space Institute would not have purchased the property and the mountain would not have been protected. This kind of preservation effort requires support from community organizations. The Friends of the Shawangunks took up the challenge, feeling that Joppenbergh Mountain is so important to Rosendale and to the Shawangunks—historically and environmentally—that it must be saved. We have pledged to do this and now we must raise our share. We need your help to accomplish this!

WHAT ABOUT THE PARKING LOT BEHIND MAIN STREET?

The parking lot, part of the Joppenbergh property, is now leased to the town and we intend that this use will continue. Friends of the Shawangunks realizes this is an important asset for Rosendale and necessary for the economic health of the downtown area.

WHAT ABOUT THE WILLOW KILN PARK AND PICNIC AREA BEHIND THE THEATRE?

Willow Kiln Park is included in the parking-lot lease and will remain as a town-maintained park and historic site. It's a nice place to sit and enjoy a sandwich from one of the local merchants.

WAS THERE A PERSON NAMED JOPPENBERGH?

Not as far as we know. Joppenbergh, or Jacob's mountain, is named after Colonel Jacob Rutsen, a merchant and the son of a Dutch immigrant from Albany. He founded the first settlement in what is now the town of Rosendale in the late 17th century. The spelling of the mountain's name has been disputed, and has been rendered as Joppenberg and Joppenburgh. It has also been called Jacob's Nose, Jacob's Mount, and, in an early 18th-century deed, Jobsenbright.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN?

For some of the history of the mountain you can go online and check out Friends' 6-page full-color brochure at shawangunks.org/joppenbergh-mtn Wikipedia has a lengthy and informative article at wikipedia.org/wiki/joppenbergh_mountain

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INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION ZONES (ISPZ)

Creating, maintaining and expanding the invisible green line.

by Robert T. O'Brien

*Moats were built to keep the invaders out, prisons are built to prevent escape,
Invasive Species Prevention Zones are formed for both.*

In the Spring 2009 *Shawangunk Watch*, I mentioned an ongoing invasive species management strategy designed to maintain biodiversity here on the Shawangunk Ridge. Efforts include removal of known invasive species, detection of new arrivals and monitoring of invasive-free areas along the Northern Shawangunks. This important work is supported until Spring 2012 by a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) eradication grant and by the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership (SRBP). The creation and future expansion of this ridge-wide ISPZ will protect native biological diversity for future generations provided we continue to survey, monitor and eradicate.

The third strategy combines both species and target approaches, which involves management of all species on a landscape scale. This is the Invasive Species Prevention Zone approach. Landscapes of scale with low levels of invasive species are few. Minnewaska and the Shawangunks happen to be one.

What is an Invasive Species Prevention Zone:

An ISPZ is a designation for a natural area that is dominated by native species and natural communities and is relatively free of invasive species. By delineating Invasive Species Prevention Zones, land managers can maximize use of limited staff, equipment, and funding resources by focusing on sites that have high ecological value, low levels of invasive species, and thus are most likely to yield results.

ISPZ Criteria

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) adopted the Minnewaska invasive species management plan which states:

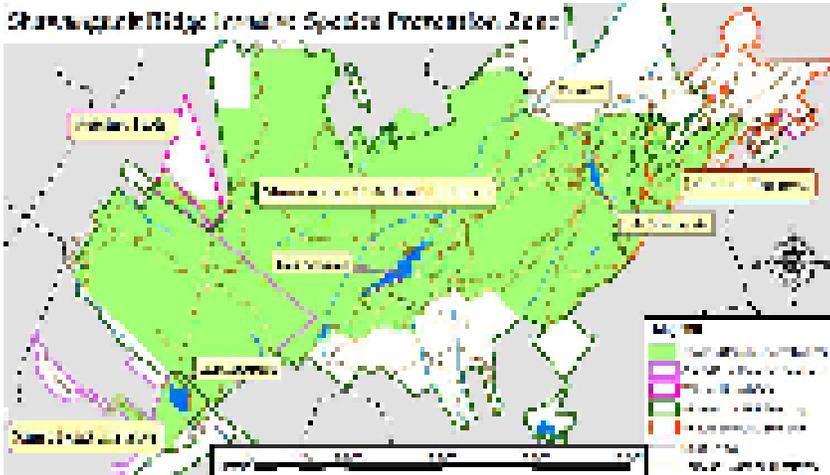
- ◆ Invasive species must be mapped and a site-specific management plan must be written covering prioritizing of control efforts.
- ◆ Invasive Species Plant Cover: Must be less than 5% in the interior of any one acre. Less than 10% along boundaries and any roadways which bisect the core.
- ◆ Size: Greater than 500 roadless acres, a biodiversity hotspot, or a buffer around a plant or habitat of concern.

Implementation

Since 2007 the work has been ongoing with the help of a single grant. In 2010, our first phase of the ISPZ invisible green line had been established, including portions of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Sam's Point and The Mohonk Preserve. The keys to success have been inclusion and implementation of the ISPZ strategy incorporating the application of best management, integrated approach and adaptive management. Invasive species field crews have proven to be a very affordable and effective means to establish, restore and maintain large, important, biologically diverse areas such as the Shawangunks. Two field seasons of work along the Ridge produced the following results: over 1.3 million plants (27 species) removed on 62 sites (no chemicals used), 99.5 km. of trails and carriage roads surveyed, and 75.2 km. of transects of invasives-free area surveyed. The first phase of Shawangunk Ridge ISPZ now comprises 16,025 acres of the Northern Shawangunks, mostly within Minnewaska State Park Preserve. This first phase of protection provides firm proof that large, relatively native tracts of land can be preserved and protected from terrestrial plant invasion with a significant return on investment. Monitoring is ongoing.

The Land and its Future

One should notice that the recently acquired Awosting Reserve at the south end of Minnewaska, and portions of the Shevchenko acquisition in Minnewaska State Park Preserve to the north, are not within the current ISPZ. Many of the lands that we acquire along the Ridge are significantly diminished by the presence of invasive species. Should the liability be the responsibility of the previous owner (as in the U.K.), or is our ridge-wide expansion of protected acreage enough



Some Facts and Perceptions

Today, most people are aware of invasive species, whether aquatic, terrestrial, insect or pathogen. People learn about invaders by every means; there is more press and information than ever before. The majority of people I meet and discuss invasive species with do agree that "invasive species are bad." However, I have had many conversations with people who have taken action, and sometimes become discouraged. Others say "Let nature take its course" and have no affection or mission towards protection of native plants or animals, regardless of how rare they may be. The perception for some is that managing invasive species is not so successful, costly, and overwhelming in scope and effort. Sometimes this is actually the case. However, costs and results are directly connected to control strategy, willingness to succeed, and persistence. If protection of native biodiversity is a core element of management, or even a strong desire, invasive species must be dealt with or some natives and their habitats will be forever lost.

Approach to Control

In the world of invasive species management, several global strategies are prescribed. All include: early detection, mapping, prioritizing, control, restoration and education. Basically the questions are: "What are we managing for,?" "What is our expected outcome,?" and "Can we succeed with reasonable effort and cost?" In answering these questions, one must choose a strategic approach. Is the approach to eradicate a particular species on a landscape scale, (a species-based approach)? Is the approach to control all invasive species to protect some conservation target in a smaller area, (a target-based approach)?

regardless of condition? We as managers, stewards and land grant entities must decide. Land for the sake of land is good. After all, a former landfill is open space too.

What we are trying to protect, preserve and expand is the highly biologically diverse lands we love, not a heavily degraded landscape. We are responsible, at least for now, for thinking about invasive species that are present on new additions to our open space. Each new parcel should be assessed to incorporate the costs of restoration and protection of biological diversity and native communities. A formal assessment and report of both rare elements and invasive species should be conducted prior to any new acquisitions. The assessment and future eradication of invasive species by necessity should become standard practice in negotiating the purchase price. This is a real cost if we, as a united force, aim to provide the best recreation, research opportunities, and habitats.

The Real Reality

We must pick and choose our battles. Every roadside invasive species is not really going to be eradicated. Not all areas of the Ridge will meet the criteria for inclusion in the ISPZ, and certain invasive species are expanding beyond eradication. In such cases, we should contain and suppress spread to the best extent possible. I am talking about the "game changers"—invasive species that are so fast-moving and prolific that there are few or no options for effective control or eradication. Here we must educate and inform the public that the transportation of invasive species by anthropogenic means is serious. This is why we need to inspect our bikes, boats, pets, machines, equipment, and ourselves when entering or leaving our ISPZ or any natural area. We too are responsible for not infecting other sites. In my former article I warned about the problems Japanese stiltgrass and black swallow-wort are presenting on and around the ridge. As expected, both are expanding their ranges. Suppression by manual and mechanical means is necessary while waiting for a solution. By actively engaging in containment and suppression of the "game changers," we at least have a chance for success when a viable means of eradication or significant reduction becomes available.

Conclusion

The Shawangunks are quantifiably fit for management of invasive species on a large scale. The greatest risks are new introductions and expanding populations in new frontiers due to lack of detection and management. With an initial low level of disturbed and invaded land, we should be persistent and willing to monitor and grow the boundaries of our ISPZ. Education, outreach, volunteers, outside grants and funding will be sought to continue this effort. Expense and planning for eradication during the acquisition phase of new open space could be used as leverage against purchase costs. A small steady stream of funding could sustain the preservation of our landscape and its plants, animals and habitats for many generations to come. Would we stand by while an invasive army crossed the moat? No! We would contain, capture and kill the invaders..

The work continues thanks to all of our partners, team members, volunteers and support from the community and the NY State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). We hope to expand the ISPZ to include greater portions of Mohonk Preserve, Sam's Point and the surrounding DEC lands in future phases of expansion. Means to fund field teams will continue to be sought out by the SRBP Research and Management Committee and the OPRHP to continue to monitor and expand our ridge-wide ISPZ.

Bob O'Brien is the invasive species field control director for the PIPC's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's (OPRHP) Environmental Management Bureau. He has worked tirelessly at the Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

857 Acres Of Mohonk Mountain House Property Sold

by Chris Rowley

(reprinted with permission of Shawangunk Journal)

"It's rare that you have the opportunity to protect 857 acres of prime Ulster County farmland in one fell swoop." So said Bob Anderberg of the Open Space Institute after news had been released of an historic agreement between OSI and the Smiley Brothers Incorporated (SBI), the family business that owns and operates the majestic Mohonk Mountain House.

The land in question lies at the base of the Shawangunk Ridge, on the eastern side. There are hundreds of acres of open fields, forested hillsides, and parts of the original system of carriage roads that were built for the Mohonk Mountain House in Victorian times.

"The primary goal was to protect this landscape, which is one of the most beautiful in the region," said Bert Smiley. "Our objectives were firstly, to retain open space for recreational use by the public; secondly, for education, as a historical site; thirdly, for environmental research, and to continue sustainable farming at Brook Farm."

"The family wanted to be sure that this property was never developed," Smiley added. "We felt that at this time, OSI and eventually Mohonk Preserve, who will manage the land, would be in a stronger position to ensure this than SBI."

Anderberg said, "I think the Smiley family always thought that preservation of the land was of the utmost importance. But, this was a good time to carry out their legacy. The Smileys have been wonderful stewards of the property for more than a hundred years. They felt comfortable that OSI would also be a good steward, and OSI is really honored that they chose us to help carry out their legacy."

Bert Smiley explained that this land once consisted of three farms. "They were Brook Farm, Pine Farm and Kleinkill Farm. In the early days, they grew food for the Mountain House, but they mostly grew hay, which was the fuel for the transportation system in those days."

Today, the Brook Farm continues, with a Community Supported Agriculture project that has more than 150 members. The farms' production of food for Mohonk Mountain House lasted up until World War II.

OSI's purchase of this large parcel of land continues their efforts of protecting the Shawangunk ridgeline, all the way from Port Jervis to Rosendale. OSI has contributed enormously to the efforts that produced Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Mohonk Preserve, Sam's Point Preserve, as well as helping to keep many farms, in active use and therefore as open space, in the Wallkill and Rondout Valleys, on either side of the Shawangunks.

Executive Director of Mohonk Preserve Glenn Hoagland said, "First, we're tremendously excited by this news. The preservation of this unique and beautiful foothills landscape is of enormous biological importance and is also hugely significant in cultural history terms, too. The Smiley Family's 140 years stewardship of the land will now be continued. They have done tremendous preservation work and we hope, when things are completed, to be able to carry it on."

"Over the next three to five years, we will fund raise to be able to buy the property from OSI. No major changes to the use of the land are contemplated, we would opt for what we call 'mixed use' conservation. That would mean a combination of public use of the lands, where possible, scientific research, educational work with schools and colleges, and the continuation of the present day sustainable farming at Brook Farm." 

A Story of People and Fire on the Shawangunk Ridge

by Gabe Chapin

When most of us think about the idea of people setting fire to the woods, it doesn't usually bring to mind images of harmony with nature and complex ecological interactions. However, the relationship between humans and fire in many parts of the globe is a long and complicated one that often plays a large role in how landscapes have evolved over time. In the Shawangunks, this story began many thousands of years ago, and continues today.

The Shawangunks are home to numerous examples of early human habitation that date back some 10,000 or more years. American Indian settlements were widespread until European colonization expanded across the region in the 1600s. As native people did in many parts of North America and elsewhere, these early inhabitants of the

Advancements in aviation and other technology following World War II aided in fire suppression efforts, and the occurrence of large wildfires decreased dramatically in the second half of the 20th century. Between 1955 and 2005, only two fires burned more than 100 acres in the Northern Shawangunks, an average of just one every 25 years. During the preceding 50-year period from 1905 and 1955, one such fire burned every five years.

This abrupt intervention into what had become a fundamental ecological process in the forests of the Shawangunks did not come without a cost. In the absence of fire trees like red maple, white pine and black gum—species that are more tolerant of shady conditions and far less valuable to wildlife—began to increase in abundance at



Firefighters carrying rakes off a float plane at Lake Awosting in 1947. This fire burned from 7,000 to 9,000 acres in the Minnewaska and Sams Point area

Hudson Valley Region routinely set fire to the landscape to promote important food sources (such as American chestnut, various oak species and blueberry), enhance habitat for desirable game species, and clear undergrowth from the forest in order to make activities such as travel and hunting easier. Charcoal evidence from the Shawangunks indicates that fires were burning with some regularity on the ridgetop for at least the past 9,000 years, most of them likely started by people.

As one would suspect, this history of fires on the landscape has played an important role in shaping the ecology of the Shawangunk Ridge. A dry and fire-prone place to begin with, the mixture of different plant species on the ridge gradually shifted over time towards those species that benefited from fire at the expense of those that did not. Many species like oak, blueberry and huckleberry thrived in the open sunny areas created by fire, as did the abundant wildlife that fed on them. In fact, many different animals, including numerous songbirds, rattlesnakes, several rare insects and even box turtles, depend on habitats that are maintained by fire. Pitch pines—renowned for their ability to survive even very intense and frequent fires—became the dominant species across the highest elevations of the ridge. As people continued to facilitate the occurrence of fire we became increasingly intertwined in the ecology of the Shawangunk landscape.

Following a series of devastating wildfires across the U.S. during the 19th and early 20th centuries in which thousands of lives were lost and countless millions of acres of forest were "destroyed," calls to suppress this "savage force of nature" were increased and fire-fighting became the charge of the newly created U.S. Forest Service.

the expense of oak and pitch pine. Unique fire-maintained habitats for plants and animals began to disappear, and now many of the species that inhabited traditionally fire-prone areas have become exceedingly rare. In addition, flammable shrubs, downed branches and other "fuels" that would have been periodically consumed by relatively low intensity fires began to accumulate in the forest, setting the stage for a much more severe fire to occur.

On a warm April day in 2008, this threat was realized when a carelessly discarded cigarette ignited what would become the largest wildfire in the Shawangunks since 1947, and the largest fire in New York since the 1995 Sundown Fire in the pine barrens of Long Island. Fueled by vast stands of overgrown and highly volatile mountain laurel, which attained heights of 10 feet or more in some areas, the Overlooks Fire quickly spread out of control and eventually burned some 3,000 acres of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, threatening dozens of homes. Many areas burned with such ferocious intensity that it may be many decades or longer before they recover back to mature forest.

The Minnewaska wildfire was just one example of how working against powerful forces of nature—floods, hurricanes or wildfires—often only serves to exacerbate their effects, resulting in greater damage to both the local communities and the ecosystems in which we live. Working with the ecology of an ecosystem rather than in direct opposition to it—for example, restoring a wetland as a natural flood control mechanism rather than building a new levee—can often lead to more effective long-term solutions for both people and nature.



Photo left: Firemen from all the local fire departments gathered at Minnewaska, along with Park and DEC firefighters, to fight the Overlooks Fire (courtesy DEC)

Controlled or "prescribed" burning can provide a means of continuing our historical legacy of living within fire-prone ecosystems in a way that is ecologically sustainable and more compatible with adjacent human land uses than perpetuating a cycle of less frequent but more severe fires. For this reason, controlled burns, which are lit intentionally, and managed by specially trained teams of firefighters, are becoming an increasingly valuable tool for managing fire-prone landscapes, with an average of over two million acres burned every year in the United States.

Following in the footsteps of the legendary Daniel Smiley who conducted the first "modern" controlled burns in the Shawangunks in the late 70s, the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership, a group of 12 agencies and not-for-profit organizations that work together in the Shawangunks, began conducting a series of controlled burns on the ridge in 2005. Starting in old fields at Mohonk Preserve's Spring Farm, the Shawangunk Ridge fire management program has since burned more than 200 acres, mostly in areas of oak-dominated forest at Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point Preserve.

These burns have helped to improve forest health by promoting the reproduction of important species like oak and pitch pine, restoring valuable habitat and food resources for wildlife and reducing accumulated fuels adjacent to residential areas. Over the next fire season, which typically runs from early April through early November, the Biodiversity Partnership hopes to burn up to several hundred more acres, with burns currently planned at Mohonk Preserve, Minnewaska State Park Preserve and Sam's Point Preserve.

So, if you happen to smell smoke on your next outing to the ridge or encounter a trail closure related to a burn, remember that fire is an important natural process that we as humans have facilitated on the landscape for many thousands of years. If you come across a favorite hiking spot that has been blackened by a controlled burn, rest assured that—fueled by pulses of vital nutrients and abundant sunlight—it will only recover with more vigor and beauty than before. Fire has played a major role in creating these incredible areas in which we live and recreate, and preserving them requires that we strive to work with the unique ecology of the landscape rather than against it.

For more information on how and why controlled burns are conducted in the Shawangunks, please visit our informational website at www.gunksfireplan.org.

Gabe is a forest and fire ecologist with the Eastern chapter of The Nature Conservancy. For the past seven years he has been actively involved in planning for, coordinating and conducting controlled burns in the Shawangunks. He has additional fire experience in the Northeast, Pennsylvania, Florida, Kentucky and Minnesota. Prior to working for TNC Gabe spent time at the U.S. Forest Service in the Rocky Mountain Station in Fort Collins, CO, and with the Anchorage Forestry Services Lab in Alaska, as well as the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. He has a masters degree in forest science from Colorado State University and a bachelors degree in forest biology from the University of Vermont.



Firemen at the Overlooks Fire (courtesy DEC)



An igniter on Old Stage Road on the Mohonk Preserve at a 50-acre controlled burn in the Spring of 2011 (courtesy of Gabe Chapin)



A photo of the forest on Oakwood Drive two years after the 2009 prescribed burn (courtesy of Gabe Chapin)

Wild Weather

by Shanán Smiley

At Mohonk this year we have experienced the wettest August and September, and the snowiest October, in 116 years. Precipitation for August was 16.76 inches, which is over 12 inches above the average, and the second wettest month ever recorded here! (The wettest was October 2005). September was slightly less impressive with 12.08 inches of precipitation, 7.77 inches above normal. Let's look at the specifics of each month.

Tropical Storm Irene brought a total of 8.52 inches of rain to Mohonk. The day it hit hardest, August 28th, Mohonk saw its rainiest day on record with 8.21 inches. I was the weather observer that day. I walked to the original 1896 brass rain gauge, showing its age with its green patina, at the end of the boat wharf. I knew I had an interesting process ahead of me. Every once in a while a storm is large enough that the amount of rain overflows the interior cylinder of the rain gauge and starts to fill the much larger outer cylinder (see photo). To measure the total precipitation amount for the day, one must measure the interior cylinder, dump it out, then fill the interior cylinder again with the overflow in the larger cylinder, take another measurement, then add the two to get the total. In the eight years I have been a weather observer at the Mohonk Lake Cooperative Weather Station, I've only once had to take two measurements, by refilling the interior cylinder. For Irene, I had to measure and refill the interior cylinder five times to get the total!! Good thing the outer cylinder has a large capacity. In the strong winds that hit after the rain of Irene, pouring water from a heavy large cylinder into a much smaller one was a challenge to say the least.

My nine-year-old son was with me, and I told him, "You will remember this day for the rest of your life." But later I wondered, will he? The frequency of flood-producing precipitation events is expected to increase with climate change. Heavy rainfall events totaling more than two inches in 24 hours have occurred more often since 2002 than any other time period since. (See graph). This trend is likely to continue under warming conditions. Warmer air has a greater capacity to hold moisture. The abnormally large storms will no longer be abnormal, but will become more expected, as Heidi Cullen writes in her book *The Weather of the Future*.

Hurricane Irene caused a lot of damage along the ridge: a landslide on Bonticou Road; severe washout on Mossy Brook Road; the new Fly Brook Causeway...gone. The southeastern slopes had a number of large blowdowns, (e.g.: near the Mohonk Preserve Visitor Center). However, the damage is not all bad in the grand scheme of the forest ecosystem. These areas where the tree canopy has been opened will harbor new life, add nutrients to the soil (if trees are left to decompose naturally), and increase forest biodiversity (species that prefer more open forest will be more likely to occur). Many birds especially love a "messy" understory, and deer don't. We might even see some oak regeneration if deer can't get in to browse the area.

A week after Irene, Tropical Storm Lee hit us with rain for over 72 hours straight. The several-day-long storm left us with an additional 7.05 inches. The catastrophic flooding continued with related damage.

How does this compare to other large hurricanes on record? Why was there so much flooding in 2011, and not for Tropical Storm Floyd? When Floyd hit (September 1999) we were more than 3.5 inches below average precipitation. The drier soil was able to absorb the 6.05 inches of rainfall, as were the wetlands, ponds and lakes. Tree damage was scattered. In comparison, before Tropical Storm Irene arrived, we were 3.87 inches above normal rainfall for the month. The ground was saturated, and the lakes, ponds and wetlands were already full. There was nowhere for the rain to go, so therefore we witnessed catastrophic flooding.

One of the other large hurricanes on record occurred in 1938. It was unnamed, as the naming of hurricanes wasn't started until the mid-1950s. This storm was a category 3, which released 9.27 inches over three days, with winds over 70 miles per hour and an estimated 1,500 trees down over 7,000 acres of Mohonk Mountain House lands. As with Irene, there was widespread flooding because this hurricane struck after a long period of wet weather.



How did this amount of precipitation affect autumn color this year? The colors overall were not spectacular. There weren't many hues of orange or red. Rather, we saw mostly yellow and brown. What caused this? The short-term effects of the rain created ideal conditions for fungal growth. This in turn caused leaf spots, yellowing, browning, and wilting. More long-term weather effects were found in the collection of research reports at the Daniel Smiley Research Center. In 1988, Anna Forster, who was assisting Dan Smiley at the time, wrote a research report on autumn color that compared the general comments through Dan's history of color with weather for that year. Her conclusions were:

1. Precipitation at least three inches above normal from January to July bring brighter colors. Dryness during the first half of the year is disastrous to beautiful fall foliage. (We were over eight inches above normal for this period.)
2. Nearly average (less than two inches above or below normal) precipitation from August - October seem to bring better color than extreme wet or dry weather. (We struck out on this account, with the wettest August and September on record.)
3. Cooler temperatures from July-September, and colder Octobers seem to be the "norm" for peak color years. (We also struck out here, with the 4th hottest July on record, and temperatures above normal for August and September as well.)

Then the record-breaking snowfall hit on October 29th. The total was 17.3 inches which is 17,200% above normal, making this the snowiest October on record. Actually, 17.3 inches of snowfall is 2.1 inches greater than the average snowfall for January, (the month of the year with the highest average snowfall!) This snow brought down many leaves prematurely and contributed to the weak display of fall

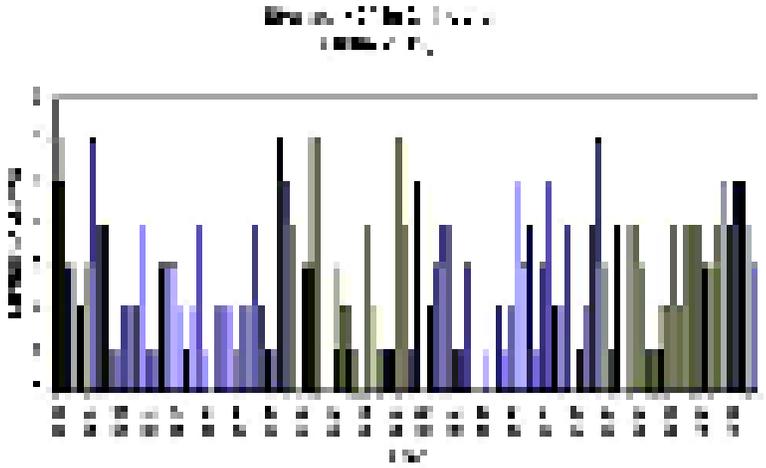
foliage this year. There were also areas of substantial tree damage from the snow due to the added weight of snow on the leaves still on the trees.

We've had some pretty wild weather this year, and the year isn't quite over! However, we have already broken the record for annual precipitation — 2011 is the wettest year in 116 years of record. ☔

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Shanan Smiley, seen at left taking the rain measurement, is the conservation biologist/collections manager at the Daniel Smiley Research Center of the Mohonk Preserve



Restoring the Historic Carriage Roads of Minnewaska

Alliance for New York State Parks Launches Effort to Rebuild Hamilton Point Carriage Road

Among the most defining characteristics of the magnificent Minnewaska State Park Preserve and its neighbors, the Mohonk Preserve and the Mohonk Mountain House, are the graceful, historic carriage roads that lace the ridge landscape. The wide and gentle carriage roads, originally built to serve 19th century horse-drawn carriages, today provide access to rugged promontories and spectacular overlooks.

But like so many other features of New York's state park system, the carriage roads are crumbling. If drainage patterns are not reestablished, retaining walls rebuilt and roads resurfaced, these carriage roads will deteriorate beyond repair and a piece of Hudson Valley history will be lost.

A \$500,000 capital campaign is underway, spearheaded by the newly formed Alliance for New York State Parks, to restore the 3.7-mile Hamilton Point Carriage Road. The campaign is off to a strong start and a challenge grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts will boost the next \$85,000 in contributions by twenty percent.

The Alliance, an initiative of the Open Space Institute, is devoted to the restoration, maintenance and support of New York's state parks. The Alliance raises private funds and builds stronger public-private partnerships to revitalize New York State parks and historic sites.

"With state parks and historic sites facing a capital backlog of more than \$1 billion, the Alliance is committed to seeking private funds to help rebuild and restore our state's defining landmarks, landscapes and recreational destinations," said Erik Kulleseid, Executive Director of the Alliance.



The Alliance is working on the Hamilton Point restoration project in partnership with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

"Vigorous grassroots support is vital for quality parks and recreational facilities—the building blocks of livable communities and strong, diverse economies," said Rose Harvey, New York State Parks Commissioner. "I urge people who enjoy parks to get behind the Alliance for State Parks' campaign to improve Minnewaska. State Parks need partnerships like this to build a green and sustainable park system for the 21st century."

The campaign builds on long-standing cooperation and coordination between State Parks, PIPC, the Mohonk Preserve, and the Smiley family's renowned Mohonk Mountain House. Through these groups' efforts the entire 67-mile system of carriage roads, traversing both parklands and privately-held property, is maintained and made accessible to the public.

This effort marks the inaugural campaign initiated by the Alliance and continues OSI's long-standing commitment to the Shawangunk Ridge and its mission of stewardship and conservation.

To donate to the Hamilton Point Carriage Road restoration campaign or to learn more about the Alliance, visit www.allnysparks.org

Photo above shows the deterioration of the Hamilton Point Carriage Road which was closed for many years to bikers and cross country skiers and hikers

Photo at left shows hikers on a restored carriage road

Save the Lakes Update

The Williams Lake Project

by Chris Beall

Thanks in large part to the generous contributions of Friends of the Shawangunks, Save The Lakes has spent the last several months researching and publicizing the issues related to the proposed residential resort at Williams Lake, with positive influences on the continuing decision-making processes.

Here is an update on events since mid-summer:

In late April, at about the same time that they submitted their Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Hudson River Valley Resorts separately applied for four permits related to the project: construction of a private water supply system; construction of a wastewater disposal system (this document must be downloaded for reading); construction of five boat docks; and the Incidental "Take" (death) of Indiana Bats. The last of these is required when construction or operation of a facility presents risks to an endangered species. The developer must provide a plan to avoid such deaths as much as practical and further must provide a "net conservation benefit" from the development activity.

Once the DEC determines that these permit applications are complete, the public will be given an opportunity to comment on them, both at a public hearing and in writing.

At the public hearing on HRVR's DEIS on June 6th, Save The Lakes, in partnership with The Sierra Club, fielded 11 speakers addressing such issues as traffic, zoning, fiscal impact, public access, and archeological impacts, along with expert testimony on hydrogeology (including water supply and wastewater disposal). Save the Lakes and our consultants then provided 145 pages of written comments raising a variety of concerns with the proposed project. Many community members commented as well, as did several Town officials, including the Town attorney, who recommended reducing the scale of the project.

In August, the DEC provided eleven pages of their own comments on the DEIS and suggested that many of their concerns (and those of the public) could be addressed by reducing the overall size of the project. Many of their comments built upon Save The Lakes' work, particularly in the area of hydrogeology. As a result, the DEC has also taken a firmer position on studying karst (a type of porous rock that influences water flow) and the developer, after years of denial, has acknowledged its substantial presence within the site.

On September 14th, HRVR submitted to the Rosendale Town Board a new proposed zoning amendment (presumably replacing the one they had submitted late in 2007). It was specifically tailored to the Williams Lake property and specifically permitted all of the uses and sizes in their proposed residential resort plan. It disregarded the recommendations of the Town attorney, DEC, and many citizens, that the project size be reduced. The Town Board referred the amendment to the Planning and Zoning Boards and to the Zoning Review Committee. Our attorney, assisted by a consultant, responded with a two-page letter pointing out that the amendment constituted "spot zoning," attempted to short-circuit the SEQRA process, and was so vague as to permit a wide variety of interpretations.

Meanwhile, our volunteer members have publicized several of our major concerns with the project via letters to local newspapers. These help educate those citizens who might otherwise not be fully aware of the consequences of the full ten-year building plan proposed by HRVR.

We have been able to get the attention of the DEC and Town officials because we are focused on the science, environmental policy, and law necessary to properly evaluate the proposed development. The people who do scientific and legal work for us rightfully expect to be paid for their efforts. You can help by again contributing financially. Additionally, you can help get the word out by forwarding this status report to a friends and suggest that they sign up to receive future ones. Another way to help is to buy one of our snazzy T-shirts (we make a little bit on each sale) and wear it around town so people will know you are concerned about the issues (go to our website).

What can we expect in the future?:

- ◆ The DEC is responsible for preparing the FEIS, though it is apparent that they will rely on developer HRVR to do most of the work (and to perform additional scientific work to back it up).

- ◆ Various Town committees are reviewing the most recent zoning proposal from the developer, which, if approved by the Town Board, would permit all of the uses proposed by HRVR for their development, without the need for them to obtain several Special Use Permits along with a number of outright zoning variances.

Most activity in the past month has centered around the Town elections, with the positions of Supervisor and two more of the five (the Supervisor counts as one) Town Board positions up for grabs. Although the Town faces several issues, the project at Williams Lake received the most publicity. Save The Lakes is not a political organization, does not endorse candidates, and thus did not participate directly. The developer, however, had no such reticence. The Manager of HRVR wrote a letter to local newspapers, with individual copies mailed to each Rosendale resident, describing candidate Jen Metzger with what can only be called faint praise, while concluding that her opponent Jeanne Walsh would "make the Williams Lake Project move forward." The *Bluestone Press* published this letter under the headline "HRVR endorses Walsh." The final outcome was that Walsh won the election with 51% of the vote. The two candidates for the Town Board who unconditionally support the project also won, by similar margins, over one incumbent and one challenger, both of whom have supported a more cautious approach.

Save The Lakes will continue to monitor the administrative progress of the Williams Lake project and will continue to bring to the attention of the public those areas in which we feel alterations are needed in order to preserve the local environment.

The Save the Lakes website is savethelakes.us

Chris Beall is on the guiding committee of Save the Lakes.

Northern Preserve and Further North

There is a lot of excitement up North these days: the Joppenbergh acquisition (see Page 1); Save the Lakes effort (previous page); and the campaign to restore the railroad trestle (trackthetrestle.org).

Devotees of the Northern Shawangunks will be able to expand their explorations. After all, these are destinations that can be accessed by bikers, skiers and hikers who have an excess of energy and the desire to experience new landscapes. Once the trestle is restored, it can be used to continue on to Joppenbergh.

What is exciting about all these efforts is that different not-for-profit organizations are getting together to work toward similar goals that ultimately will protect more open space in the Shawangunks and beyond.

Take a good look at these hundred-year old postcards that are a part of the history of Ulster County. They were sold in the early 1900s to tourists who made the trip from far- away Poughkeepsie to see a stunning engineering feat. We might all experience this once again after decades of decay. To find out more, go to the website: trackthetrestle.org

Campaign to Restore the Rosendale Trestle

In Ulster County, New York, the Rosendale Railroad Trestle, perched high above Rondout Creek, is a symbol of the history and scenic beauty unique to this Hudson Valley town. The 116-year old structure, acquired for protection by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT) and the Open Space Institute (OSI), is being restored as a magnificent recreational asset and a gateway along the expanded Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.

Based on engineers' analysis of the structure, new decking and railings must be installed across the entire span, making it safe for public use for the first time in years.

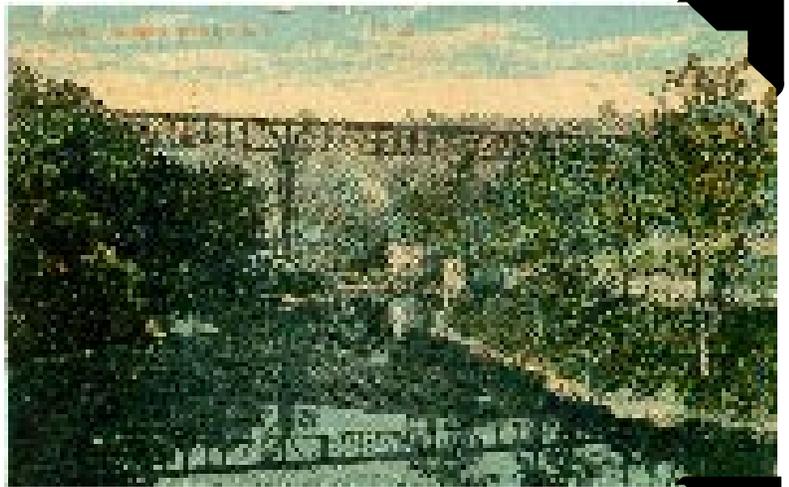
Once restored, the Rosendale Trestle will:

- ◆ Provide the "missing link" in one of the best networks of rail trails not only in the Hudson Valley, but in all of New York State;
- ◆ Create an unrivaled recreational opportunity in Ulster County;
- ◆ Develop a unique tourist destination in Ulster County, encourage new economic development in Rosendale, and in the four other towns bisected by the new Wallkill Valley Rail Trail;
- ◆ Provide people an opportunity to enjoy nature with minimal environmental impact, and
- ◆ Preserve an everlasting landmark for generations of historians, educators, and students to come.

As a centerpiece of Rosendale, this historic landmark will be all of ours to enjoy. For more information you can contact:

Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Inc.
www.wallkillvalleylt.org

Open Space Institute
www.osiny.org

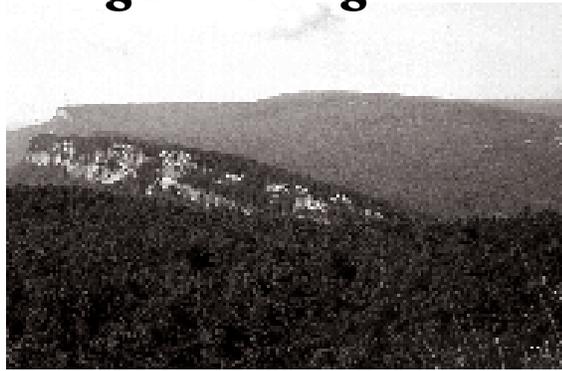


Friends Goes Online

www.Shawangunks.org

Check out Friends of the Shawangunks website at www.Shawangunks.org

It has back issues of our newsletter *Shawangunk Watch*, links to dozens of Shawangunk sites, updates on ridge projects and threats, and more than 80 photos showing natural features of the ridge. The site also provides an easy way to join Friends, contact us, or send a donation using a credit card.



FRIENDS of the SHAWANGUNKS
Preserving Open Space Since 1963

Friends of the Shawangunks, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization working to preserve open space in the Shawangunks.

The Shawangunk Conservancy, Inc. is a not-for-profit land conservancy.

Friends of the Shawangunks
P.O. Box 270
Accord, NY 12404

e-mail: info@shawangunks.org

Give a Friends Tee Shirt

Tee shirts are \$15, and that includes shipping.

Our shirt is 100% cotton, and features a portion of the NY/NJ Trail map so you can never be lost if you hike in that area! Go to our website: shawangunks.org for an order form.



PLEASE CONSIDER A YEAR-END CONTRIBUTION

There is still work to be done
protecting Open Space
and it is critical to be able to do it now!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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A copy of FOS and 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.

 Printed on recycled paper

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Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Shawangunks* or *The Shawangunk Conservancy*. Contributions are tax-deductible.

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

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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. IBM matching checks must be made out to The Shawangunk Conservancy.