Shawangunk WATCH

Friends of the Shawangunks and The Shawangunk Conservancy

August 2017 Volume 22 Number 2

Witches Hole Falls

ALDER LANE ❖ POETRY ❖ D&H CANAL ❖ WATERFALLS

Preserving Open Space in the Shawangunks since 1963

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN HAYES

Riding The Ridge *by Janet Kern*

This is a love story about how a girl brought her horse to the Ridge, and the horse gave the Ridge to that girl.

I was born in NYC and raised in Yonkers, but my mother and Aunt had enjoyed horseback riding in their own youth, and made riding lessons part of my childhood. When Mom bought an abandoned 1882 farmhouse on the south facing slope of the Shawangunks in Gardiner, I fulfilled a long held dream and got a horse of my own. We built a small corral on the hillside behind the house, and in 1973 a red and white "blanket" Appaloosa colt joined our family. "Gorgeous Georgie O'Keefe" and I were partners for the next 26 years. He was an agile, confident, kind and sensible guy, that rare "bomb-proof" horse all riders want but very few find, who never spooks or balks or bolts. Being on horseback became a kind of meditation for me, with its gentling of intellect and focus on presence -- the grasses, the mountain laurel, the hawks above, the scents and skitterings all around, and ourselves, surrounded and engaged, part of every thing. With Georgie, on the Ridge, I received the gift of being fully in the here and now, in a place as close to heaven as a woman could hope for.

On any given morning, we would head into the forest. I came to realize that the outbound terrain of daybreak and the homebound terrain of sunset do not resemble one another, although they are the same. No fear. If ever we got lost, Georgie found our way home. On one particular day, he discovered a secret, and I learned an important lesson: when someone you trust tries really hard to tell you something, pay attention.

Our favorite ride was to Lake Awosting. We'd head out from the corral, steeply uphill to an old lumber road, then follow a network of trails and deer paths, taking switchbacks north and east/west along increased elevations, crossing and re-crossing streams and eventually arriving at Spruce Glen. Ice remains on the ground there well into spring. There is a modest downward cliff on the left, leading to old-growth trees and a small wetland, and a craggy rock cliffside on the right. Georgie and I always enjoyed getting to Spruce Glen. The trail was wider and level, a great place to canter after all that climbing we'd done and a good drink from the lake not far ahead.

But this time, Georgie refused to go forward. He stopped. He tossed his head, chuffed, rattled the bit, flared his nostrils, and arched his neck so far that his head was nearly under my chin. He spun in a full circle, trying to turn back.

I urged him forward and he obeyed, but with a sidestepping prance rightward and leftward, nostrils flared to the size of baseballs. What the hell? A dead deer? Never bothered him before.

We got to Awosting, drank the cool water, had a sandwich (me) and carrots (him), rode the loop and headed for home. Spruce Glen, again, No other way, and we both knew it. Tired though he must have been, Georgie snorted, lowered his head and went into high gear, galloping through.

Several months later, at Elsie Brett's convenience store in Dwaarkill, I overheard some hunters talking.

"He swears he saw a bear on the Ridge."

"Bull----. They've been gone for decades."

"He swears."

"Bull----."

Georgie knew. He died in my arms decades ago, but every time I pass the Spruce Glen crags, those ideal ursine dens, I recall that day, and that horse, and the transformed life he gave me in one of earth's Last Great Places. And I am grateful beyond measure.

Janet is a Friends Board Member.

Shawangunk WATCH

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This issue was edited and assembled
by John Hayes, Elaine Laflamme,
Jean Lerner, Steve MacDonald
and Thomas Nozkowski

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

The Shawangunk Conservancy, Inc.
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The latest financial report of
Friends of the Shawangunks
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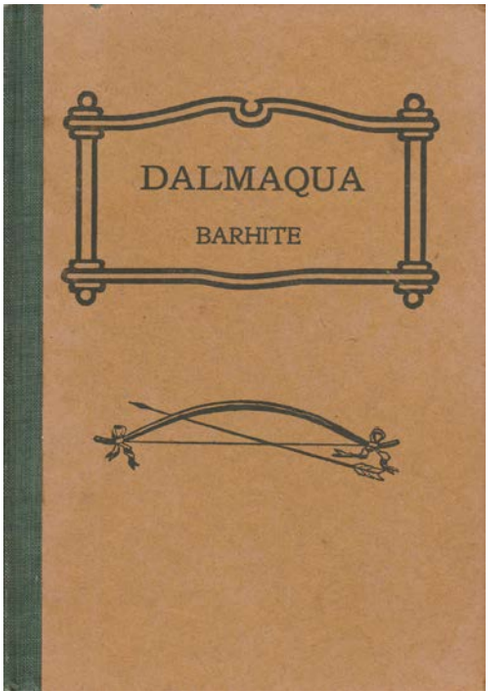
The Poetry of Three Shawangunk Lakes *by Steve Jervis*

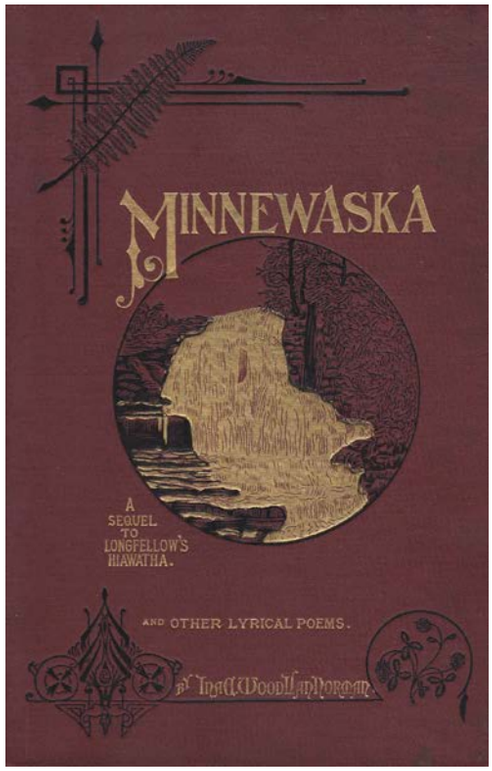


The spectacular lakes of the northern Shawangunks have long received literary attention. They are indeed the stuff of poetry. One example is Minnewaska and Other Lyrical Poems, by Ina E. Wood van Norman. The book was published in 1897 in a handsome edition with gilt-edged pages. Its author was in her early 30s; in her frontispiece portrait she is wearing three strands of pearls and looking every bit the aristocrat, like Margaret Dumont in the Marx Brothers movies. The title poem, nearly 60 pages long, is "a sequel to Longfellow's Hiawatha," which was immensely popular in its day. Mrs. Wood forsakes Longfellow's pounding trochaic tetrameter for rhymed couplets, which make for some strained verse, the kind of thing that Mark Twain ridiculed.

And his wild shout echoed his loud enah!
As he sped away through the wilds afar.
An answering echo, a shuddering moan,
Quaked through the depths of the valley lone ...

Her subject is a daughter of Hiawatha and his wife Minnehaha. Her name is: Minnewaska.

Yet alas! alas! Oh, Minne-ha-ha!
Alas! alas! fair Minnewaska!



She is abducted by the evil storm god and lies in a trance for many years. At length she is rescued by "the great chieftain Mohonk." Finally they are transformed into the lakes that bear their names.

Another local lake, "Aowosting," is the subject of "Dalmaqua" (1911), by Jared Barhite. The spelling is Barhite's, as is the poem, nearly the length of Mrs. van Norman's. It too is rhymed, but not in couplets. Like "Minnewaska," "Dalmaqua" celebrates a marriage–rather daringly, between a white man and an Indian maiden. The bridegroom, Petrus Pels, has years before been abducted in an Indian raid, part of the bloody struggle between colonists and native Americans. Barhite's sympathies are all with the Indians:

Now Dalmaqua's loved father falls
Beneath the stroke of bloody men
Whose avarice has led them on
To slaughter and rapine again.

When the colonists "rescue" Pels from his abductors, he chooses to stay with Dalmaqua and their young son. For this he is immediately shot by whites. Much of this is history, but now legend takes over. Dalmaqua, with her "flinty chisel strong," carves her husband's face into a rock near the lake. There it can still be seen (a photograph appears in Barhite's text).

Illustration from "Minnewaska."

These poems share a pious tone. Barhite's publisher assures us that "the sentiments are pure in thought and expression, and are worthy of an abiding place in the mind and heart of every American youth." Copies may be found in libraries in New Paltz and elsewhere in this country. More surprisingly, they are also in three libraries in Malaysia.

These works will not enter the canon of American verse, but they do have considerable historical interest. The "Minnewaska" volume has recently been reprinted by two presses, Palala and Wentworth. The latter proclaims that "this work has been selected by scholars as being culturally important, and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it." They are certainly part of Shawangunk history and lore.

Of particular interest for our readers: both poems are accompanied by photographs of the region, and "Minnewaska" has a number of sketches.

Steve is a Friends board member.

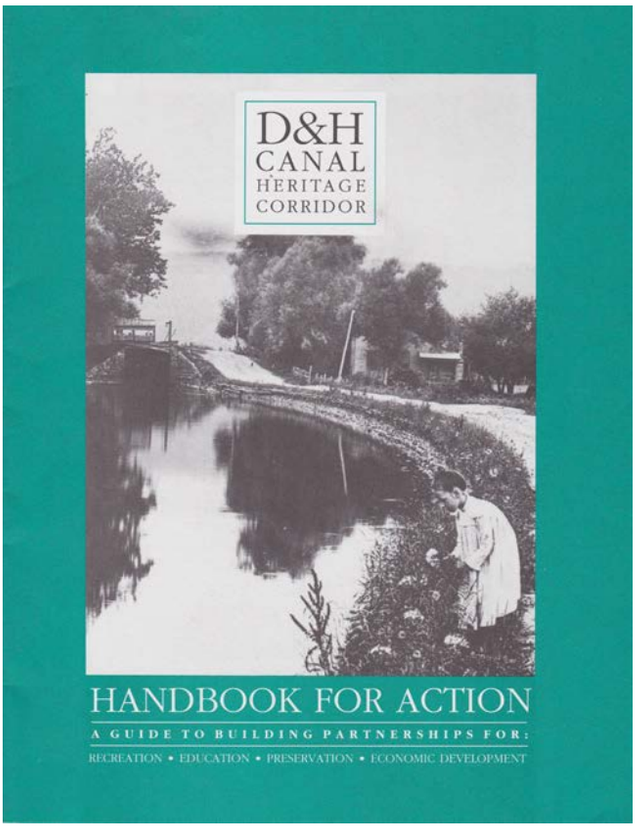
A Study in *Time* and *Land Protection*

BY *Elaine Laflamme*

"You can't tell where you are going, unless you know where you have been." ~UNKNOWN

In June 1991 the New York Parks and Conservation Association (now known as Parks & Trails New York) and the National Park Service in collaboration with Central Hudson Gas & Electric Co., the D&H Steering Committee and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust published a Handbook for Action for an area they called the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor:

"Against the backdrops of the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains, the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor is situated in a rural valley of scenic farmlands and woodlands, dotted with historic hamlets. The corridor traces the historic route of the Delaware & Hudson Canal, the New York Ontario & Western Railroad and the scenic Rondout Creek spanning the width of central Ulster County."



As envisioned by the many participants behind the Handbook for Action, there would be trails, linear parks, and bike and canoe routes along the D&H Canal, the O&W Railroad bed and the Rondout Creek: "[t]he canal, railroad and creek are the threads that weave together the fabric of the Heritage Corridor with its many outstanding natural and historic resources." From a conservation point of view, it was a win-win as the land had already been disturbed in 1825 with the coming of the D&H Canal followed by the O&W Railroad, all witnessed by the Rondout Creek which was there first. "Preservation," stated Gayle Grunwald of the D&H Canal Historical Society, one of the many moving forces behind the Handbook for Action, "in itself is certainly important but granting the public access to the historic resource is the action which truly honors its history."

Part of the action plan some 26 years ago called for hiking and biking trails and canoe put-ins and take-outs along a 35-mile stretch from Kingston to Spring Glen. Embedded within the Handbook was a multi-page Action Guide that proposed among other things, recreational actions or projects within the Heritage Corridor. Many of the suggested actions/projects focused on the O&W Railroad, which lay abandoned since 1957.

This multi-use trailway could provide safe and scenic recreational opportunities close to home for local residents, young and old alike. This trail could be used for bicycling, walking, jogging, cross-country skiing and family outings.

How far did we get?

The O&W Trail in 1991

Thanks in part to the D&H Steering Committee, two 3.5 mile linear parks were already in process when the Handbook went to press; the Hurley-Marbletown Rail Trail between NYS Route 209 and Marcott Road and the Accord Rail Trail between Accord and Kerhonkson. The Action Guide called for extensions of these O&W trailways in both directions, north and south, to– "establish [a] multi-use trail connecting Kingston to Hurley-Marbletown Rail Trail" and "assess feasibility of a trailway between Ellenville and Napanoch."

The O&W Trail Now

What started as a 3.5 mile rail trail between Hurley and Marbletown is now the longest existing segment of the O&W Rail Trail, running for more than 12 continuous miles with plans and funding in place to extend the trail for the last 1.8 remaining miles to the City of Kingston. Currently, the Hurley Rail Trail runs three miles (2.2 miles of 10-foot-wide paved trail) along Route 209 in Hurley and connects to the Marbletown Rail Trail. The Marbletown Rail Trail continues the Hurley Rail Trail southward for approximately nine miles to the Town of Rochester. These trails, parts of which are cinder/stone dust and parts of which are paved, are open for walking, running, bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing and have become highly popular linear parks. The next phase, known as the Kingston Rail Trail Project will link the Hurley Rail Trail north to the City of Kingston. Construction of the Kingston segment is set to begin this year.

7

The Future is Up to You

The Future of the D&H Corridor Is in Your Hands

For the past three years, the people of Ulster County have volunteered their time to help make the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor a reality. Volunteers have sloshed through mud and snow to survey the canal and the rights-of-way, shaped the corridor concept through Corridor Steering Committee participation, and spoken out at town board meetings to encourage development of linear parks in Rochester, Hurley and Marbletown. Most recently, through the public planning process, more than one hundred people added their views to create this document.

And Now It's Your Tu

The success of the D&H Heritage Corridor hinges involvement of you and y friends, neighbors and cc groups.

This handbook offers ide suggestions on Heritage projects that can make y nity a better place to live, through them. Think abo projects that might be un Talk about the projects a meeting of your local gan historic association, civic tion, or scout troop. Pick work on. Then, most of a FUN DOING IT!

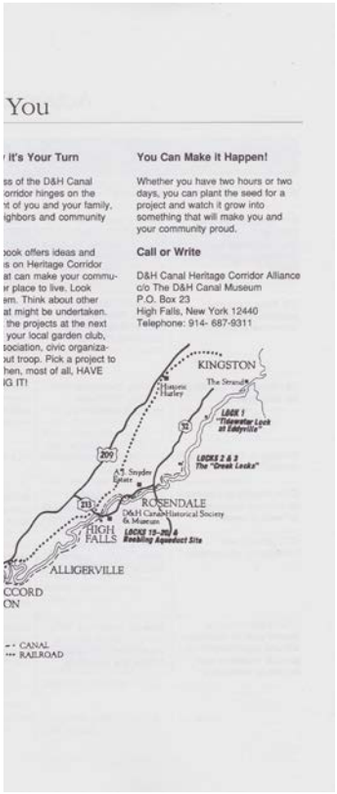
Looking to the South, the feasibility of an O&W trailway between Ellenville and Napanoch (R4 in the Action Guide) went from concept to plan to execution and is now in the process of being extended to Kerhonkson. That process received a boost recent-

ly when the Open Space Institute acquired a key portion of the O&W Railroad bed, linking an 11-mile stretch of the O&W trailway as it runs between Ellenville and Kerhonkson and connecting to the Accord Rail Trail. The recent acquisition, a 22-acre parcel in Wawarsing, was previously owned by Central Hudson Gas & Electric Co., a participant in the Handbook for Action. That parcel runs past protected lands of the Minnewaska State Park Preserve and includes several thousand feet of the bank of the Rondout Creek, rail bed of the former O&W Railroad and sections of the D&H Canal, including the remains of a historic boat basin that once served the canal. "OSI's acquisition of the rail bed located on Berme Road in the Town of Wawarsing is very timely," said Hank Alicandri, who serves as the head of the Ellenville-Wawarsing Intermunicipal Parks and Recreation Commission. "With the recent donation by the Napanoch Correctional Facility to the Town of Wawarsing of a permanent trail easement crossing the prison property, we are collectively closer to the reality of a recreational rail trail running through the heart of the Rondout Valley and showcasing all of its natural beauty."

When completed, the O&W Rail Trail will connect the Village of Ellenville to the hamlets of Port Ben, Kerhonkson, Accord, High Falls, Cottekill, and the City of Kingston. The longer range vision is to connect the proposed Kingston Rail Trail to the Catskill Mountain Rail Trail, the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, and Kingston Point Trail, allowing for a unified rail trail network that will span much of Ulster County.

Many participants over the years including, FOS, OSI, Rondout Valley Rail Trail Initiative, D&H Heritage Corridor Alliance together with Ulster County, the Towns of Marbletown, Rochester, Rosendale and Wawarsing and the Village of Ellenville, have worked to make the O&W Rail Trail a recreational jewel and to bring the long range vision closer to reality. Some of the players were working from the Handbook for Action and many were unaware of its existence and yet the handbook and its participants planted a seed in 1991 that over the years grew into approximately 29 miles of rail trail open to the public.

Elaine is a Board member of FRIENDS.



PHOTOGRAPHS ON THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:
D & H Canal south of Summitville.

Signage for Canal Path on Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro.

Lock 49, Spring Glen.

Canal House in High Falls, future home of the D&H Museum.
Photos by Thomas Nozkowski

OPPOSITE: Cover and a page from the Handbook for Action

HERE IS A LINK TO THE COMPLETE D&H CANAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR HANDBOOK (1991)
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwmmItNhuR-sUVV4T0doZW1oYlk/view?usp=sharing

NOTES FROM THE SOUTHERN SHAWANGUNKS BY SUSAN ERNY

Deerpark Rural Alliance, the community group monitoring Dragon Springs, has been hard at work. DRA has had a presence at 95% of Deerpark's Zoning, Planning and Town Board meetings. Unfortunately, the remaining four DS variances were passed at the April 20 ZBA meeting. The withdrawal of the fifth variance request, regarding three miles of exterior fencing, is seen as a victory at least for the moment. Another hopeful point is that the Department of Environmental Conservation is involved in an enforcement action with the DS Galley Hill bridge, where three of those four variances apply.

DRA is now recruiting for its group. At a June 20 community-wide meeting, it held a "conversation" with residents from four of the town's seven hamlets to explore governance, growth, and development of positive community involvement. Approximately 55 people attended. Attendees were asked to identify the strengths and the problems of their particular hamlets. Each group presented its ideas at the end of the meeting. DRA will assess the results and plan its next step.

Three major issues will be addressed. Foremost is the zoning. By changing Galley Hill Road from Rural Residential to Hamlet Mixed Use the Town opened the door wide to major development on the ridge. The Town has said it would revisit the zoning issue, but it has not been on the agenda since late fall 2015. DRA will pressure the Town to follow through on that point.

Second, Dragon Springs has added an eighth story atop its rehearsal space without a permit. A stop-work order was issued in September 2016 but the new story has not been demolished and DS

FRIENDS ACQUIRES ALDER LANE PROPERTY

In 1975 when I started hiking in the Shawangunks, I thought it would be interesting to walk in the area southwest of the Stony Kill. Private landowners at the end of Rock Haven Road made it hard to find a way "in" but I had three old (and extremely misleading) Walking News *maps to show some possible routes. One drizzly Saturday that autumn, walking west from the vicinity of Stony Kill Falls, following the high tension lines, I looked for old roads or paths that headed in the right direction.*

A little later I reached an old road with Long Path blue blazes running across the power line swath. The LP had been moved to Jenny Lane by then and a logging operation had torn up the immediate area so it was a bit of a mess. After an hour of floundering around as the rain got heavier, I gave up and went home. It was twenty years before I returned to Alder Lane.

And then it quickly became my favorite way to access the Little Stony Kill and its great falls, Panther Rock and the Tombstone Path, among many other extraordinary features of the Shawangunk topography.

–TN

A small but absolutely crucial "gateway" parcel of land on Alder Lane appeared at an Ulster County tax sale and Friends has stepped in to acquire it and protect this area. This acquisition is one of the keys to the permanent protection of a large area around Stony Kill Falls on the northern border of Minnewaska State Park.

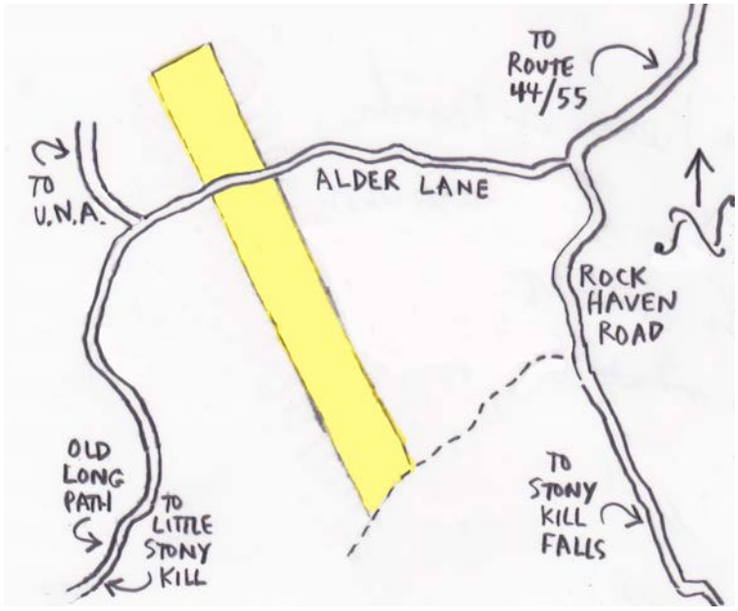
This area, including the Friends' parcel, is historically important as a traditional berry-picker route to the ridge from Kerhonkson and the Rondout Valley. Cellar holes and associated rock walls are left over from the days of cutting millstones and building blocks. "Uncle Abe's Hut," a stone shelter built on the side of a great rock is a local landmark. The trails of the old Foord Estate, Soyuzitka (the Ukranian National Association) and the remnants of the Long Path as it was in the early 1970s connect here. One very active FOS member says that some of the finest blueberries and mushrooms of the Shawangunks are found in this area.

FOS is uniquely positioned to act quickly to make small land purchases that, for technical reasons, are not feasible for the State. Our mid-term plan is to have our sister unit, The Shawangunk Conservancy, hold the land until a transfer can be made to the park. The longer-term plan is to assist in the purchase of several adjacent parcels that will be added to the park, with the development of more hiking options in this rarely visited area.

Since 1986 Minnewaska State Park Preserve has grown from 10,400 acres to nearly 24,000. Park planners envision that Minnewaska will eventually grow to 26,000 to 27,000 acres. Along with the Mohonk Preserve (about 8,500 acres), there are now over 33,000 acres of ridgetop land in the Northern Shawangunks (north of Route 52) preserved for open space, educational, scientific and recreational purposes.

Assembling a large state park involves purchasing scores of parcels in all sizes – from the 4,780-acre Ellenville watershed (now the Sam's Point area of Minnewaska State Park Preserve) to scattered one-acre units. Each protects an important part of the visual beauty and ecological integrity of the Shawangunk Ridge.

Alder Lane is an important example. Over the past 25 years, larger groups such as the Open Space Institute have purchased thousands of acres



Dragon Springs

is in litigation with the town on that matter.

That eighth story raises concerns about fire safety. Some buildings apparently do not have certificates of occupancy. Dragon Springs President Johnathon Li recently wrote to the Town of Deepark terminating fire inspections at the site. One fire commissioner has stated that "there is not an aerial truck in the tristate region that could reach" a building of seven or eight stories. DRA says it will demand fire inspections and request to see an approved fire emergency plan.

Third, in the event that DRA deemed an Article 78 action against the Town for zoning changes was warranted, a substantial amount of funding would be needed. Hence, DRA plans to develop a fund-raising strategy.

Susan is on the Boards of the Deerpark Rural Alliance and the Friends of the Shawangunks.

BY H. NEIL ZIMMERMAN WITH THOMAS NOZKOWSKI

Alder Lane

protecting significant swaths of the western (and quite rugged) slope of the Shawangunk Ridge near Ellenville and Kerhonkson.

However, at the northeast end of the large assemblage that includes the Witch's Hole and the Mine Hole Hollow is an area that was formerly worked by the 19th century millstone cutters. Broken into smaller parcels, it is a stunning and austere landscape – rock slabs, rock quarries, pitch pine, and blueberry barrens. A number of these smaller parcels lie between the Little Stony Kill and Rock Haven Road in the Town of Kerhonkson.

This is where The Shawangunk Conservancy can play an important role. TSC was able to secure Alder Lane by acting quickly, and will eventually seek to convey it to the Palisade Interstate Park Commission. More important, it opens up the possibility of acquiring several other adjacent parcels of land, all of which can be added to the state park, thus protecting more of this alluring landscape.

We will need your help to continue pursuing these acquisitions. Join us in saving the Shawangunks.

PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS NOZKOWSKI

I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN OR RENEW MY MEMBERSHIP.

- ❑ Benefactor $250.
- ❑ Patron $100.
- ❑ Family $25.
- ❑ Individual $15.
- ❑ Other $_____

❑ I would like to make an additional contribution to The Shawangunk Conservancy for land acquisition.

Amount $_____

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

Matching Grants: If your employer has a matching grants program, send us the forms and we'll do the rest. IBM matching checks must be made out to The Shawangunk Conservancy.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ Zip_____ State_____

Email _____ ❑ This is a Change of Address or Email

Please print clearly.
Your email address will help save time and money. It will be used for action alerts and the acknowledgment of contributions only. Neither The Shawangunk Conservancy nor Friends of the Shawangunks shares its mailing list with any other organization, ever.

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

Witches Hole Falls

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY JOHN HAYES

My latest adventure was a solo hike in late May to the Witches Hole and the Witches Hole Falls. The trek was not arduous but required a little stamina. I left at 1 pm, figuring to arrive at the falls around 2:30, eating lunch along the way in, spending a half hour taking pictures, and taking a snack break on the way out. I reached the trailhead by turning at the sign for Port Ben on Route 209, at the Ver Nooy Kill in Naponoch. I set out from the small parking lot along the Berme Road in Port Ben. The first portion of the hike is definitely a cardio workout. The lower portion of the carriage road (Lawn Road) is somewhat washed out, so it required care negotiating the surface. The scenery along the way is "typical" Shawangunk beauty: hemlock and mixed oak woods with an imposing ravine and (unnamed) brook on the right for much of the rise. I gave myself an hour to get to the upper cliffs, allowing for breaks to drink water and admire the changing scenery. This segment of the hike is easy to follow. My favorite section, toward the top, is an oak woods among an understory of blueberries. The cliff on top of Witches Hole is a perfect place for lunch (see photo). Here you can gaze across the hollow and watch the vultures soar close to the cliffs.

ABOVE: the view from the Inner Escarpment, looking across the Witches Hole.
BELOW AND ON PAGE 1: Witches Hole Falls.

Next came the decent to the falls. This portion is marked by square metal blazes nailed to trees. They are spaced closely enough to follow, but the trail is overgrown with mountain laurel and other foliage and requires close attention. The decent is steep and fairly quick, and then the trek out to the falls begins. After about a half mile I found myself in what I like to call "The Enchanted Forest." This is the beautiful Witches Hole. Not a soul around, and perfect to just stand still and take it all in: oversized ferns and incomparable lushness. But the falls beckoned. Once again the mountain laurel was thick, requiring one to keep a sharp eye out for blazes in the dappled sunlight. Finally I heard the distant welcoming sound of strong rushing water.

As I approached the falls I saw that they were swollen with recent rainfall, much more of a full and glistening cascade than I'd seen before. It was tricky working my way to the base of the the falls over the fallen trees and slippery rocks—all the while carrying my tripod, which occasionally doubled as a hiking stick.

The falls were magnificent, cascading in a huge spreading apron, and thundering into the basin and continuing down the rocky streambed. I allowed the half hour to capture my images.

By 3:30 I had packed my gear and begun my careful retreat. I reminded myself that this is no place to be careless. Nobody would be passing here any time soon. I hiked back through the Witches Hole and up to the cliffs, where a water break and a granny smith apple hit the spot. Farther down the trail the sun was cutting through the oak forest in such a beautiful way that I just had to stop and enjoy it for a few minutes.

There's an optional alternate route on the descent. Soon after the oak woods the trail forks, the left path giving a different perspective on the way down. Here, once again, the trail is washed out, and I resisted the urge to go at too quick a pace.

A leisurely gait got me back to the parking lot at 5:30, with a deep sense of contentment and mild exhaustion, and a feeling that I had just left my newest favorite place in the Shawangunks.

For now at least.

This is the first in a series of articles by John Hayes—hiker, photographer and FRIENDS board member—as he explores the magnificent "water features" of the Shawangunks, from towering Verkeerderkill Falls (180 feet) to smaller but no less spectacular cascades and curtain falls. John usually hikes with a goal, often to capture a photograph in optimum light. Some destinations are a short stroll from a parking lot, while others require "a bit of a trek," he says, "but the payoff is well worth the extra effort."