

# Shawangunk Watch

Friends of the Shawangunks and  
The Shawangunk Conservancy

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## TSC Protects Brooks Parcel!

Upcoming  
Member Meeting

Remembering  
Keith LaBudde and  
Thomas Nozkowski

*Photo by Greg Miller,  
courtesy of Open Space Institute*

SUMMER 2019  
Volume 24 Number 2

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PROTECTING  
OPEN SPACE IN  
THE SHAWANGUNKS  
SINCE 1963

# “B” is for Brooks, A Big Value Small Parcel

The Shawangunk Conservancy (TSC) closed on our most recent purchase, previously known as “The B Parcel.” Henceforth, this scenic and undeveloped seven acres will be known as The Brooks Parcel after William A. Brooks, Frances Brooks, and Judith Ann Charles, who sold the parcel to TSC so that it would be preserved in its natural state in perpetuity. We are deeply grateful to Open Space Institute’s Clovehitch Land Protection Fund, which provided a significant portion of the purchase price of \$21,000. Other generous members closed the gap so that we did not have to dip into our reserves.

The protection of the Brooks parcel, which is located on the western side of the Clove Valley on a rocky summit known as Rock Hill, is of critical importance. As is the case with the five-acre DeGraw lot that we bought last year, these small parcels are adjacent to enormous swaths of protected lands, which makes them more valuable environmentally than their modest size would suggest. Large, unfragmented landscapes are increasingly rare and extremely valuable ecologically for maintaining biodiversity as well as scenic views.

We have some other properties in our sights and on our wish list for purchase. To further our ongoing efforts, send your donation to The Shawangunk Conservancy or Friends of the Shawangunks (address and website elsewhere in this issue).

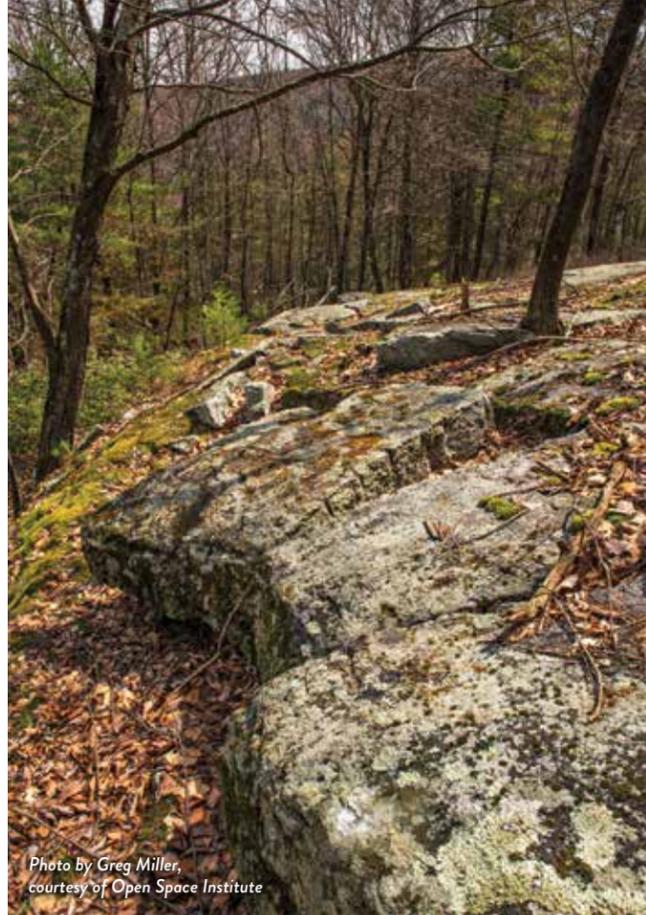


Photo by Greg Miller,  
courtesy of Open Space Institute

## WATCHING PEOPLE (AND OTHER CREATURES) IN THE GUNKS

by Anka  
Angrist

Those who donate time and effort to help preserve the Shawangunks reap ample rewards. Nevertheless, it sometimes demands a bit of extra dedication to recognize them, as in the following instances:

One spectacular day in early spring, before the leaves had emerged on the trees, I had set up a spotting scope on the Undercliff Road to observe a Peregrine Falcon nest site. Several early morning hikers were excited to see the birds entering the site with prey for the developing chicks. One couple asked what I was observing, and hearing that they were nesting falcons, in a voice rife with disappointment, commented, “Oh, we have those in New York City. Can you tell us where we can see some colorful red and blue birds?”

Another day, a small group of us had just parked at the Undivided Lot for a hike to Split Rock when suddenly two cars appeared and unloaded a group of tough-looking guys. Scarily big, heavily tattooed, they stopped traffic on both sides of the road and gestured wildly at our small group to stay put. I imagined the setup for a robbery or a reckoning for various obscure transgressions. Grunting, the toughs held traffic at bay on both sides of the road. Then they jumped into the road, bending close to the pavement. “It’s a snapper!” they cried softly in unison. Stepping back they revealed a tiny turtle struggling across the pavement to the wooded ravine on the opposite side. When the diminutive reptile had crossed safely, they nodded to the assembled crowd, got in their cars and drove away.

On another occasion, I was driving on the Clove Road when a large woman coiffed in a beehive hairdo and dressed in a frilly, pink, puffy-sleeved dress stopped her car abruptly in front of me. She got out and I was astounded to see her pick up a large, very muddy Painted Turtle and

deposit it safely on the other side. She then took a box of wipes from her glove compartment, cleaned her hands, smoothed her hair and departed.

Another day I was walking with a friend who has distinguished herself in her profession and is widely recognized. We passed a field with a number of bluebird boxes and a large descriptive sign indicating that bluebirds were the intended residents. In a few moments, we were treated to the sight of a graceful bird that swooped in front of us and entered the nearest box. “A tree swallow,” I said confidently. “No, Anka, it says right here that these are bluebirds,” my friend countered. I never did convince her that birds, beautiful though they are, do not always respect our categories.

In yet another comeuppance I passed a large family group picnicking on the banks of The Peters Kill. A boy yelled to me to come see a snake winding along the bank. “Do you know what it is?” he asked. “It’s a Banded Water Snake,” I said. As I climbed back up to the trail, I heard him say, “The lady says it’s a water snake, but I have my doubts!”

So passes another day saving the Gunks.

## Keith LaBudde 1934-2019

Friend, FOS Founder, Fighter for the Ridge

The following are excerpts from Keith's obituary in *The New Paltz Times*, followed by comments from his wife Pril Smiley and friends.

Keith's life took an unforeseen and profound turn in the mid-1960s, when he was driving to the New Paltz area from the city for the first time. As he neared the Wallkill Valley, he saw the vast swath of the Gunks cliffs in brilliant sunshine. He was blown away. “The rock faces were glowing,” as he later described the experience. Keith wasted no time in taking up rock climbing.

He soon moved to the Gunks, and quickly became involved in various local land preservation efforts. In those early years, preserving land in the Shawangunks was tough work: the adversaries were large and powerful, the land preservation ethic was less embedded than it is now, and money was scarce. Keith became an early founder, board member, and long-time president of Friends of the Shawangunks, tirelessly devoting himself to protecting the Shawangunk ridge and its adjacent areas. He also volunteered many decades of his energy and time to the Mohonk Preserve and was actively engaged with Open Space Institute. Throughout, he was viewed as a leader with passion and integrity.

### PRIL WRITES:

It was probably “meant to be” that Keith married me in 1995—having already committed himself to the Smiley family land conservation ethic for 25 years—with another 25 years to follow.

One of the many joys of our residency at Woodland Pond has been the great blue herons that live on/in/above our ponds, and are visible from our windows. Long ago Keith and I started thinking of the herons as our “guardian angels,” as they fly back and forth every day, “looking over us,” we imagined.

On the night before Keith died, all of a sudden the first heron of this season flew by, and Keith seemed delighted as I said, “look, here’s the first heron!” At dusk, on the next day, hours after Keith’s death, the heron flew by again, going toward their home pond—very low and close to our windows. It was so beautiful.

That night I called Keith’s niece to tell her about Keith, and she seemed very touched by the story of our herons; so, I sent her my photo image of the heron “guarding” us. Right away she sent me the following, about the meaning of herons.

*According to North American Native tradition, the Blue Heron brings messages of self-determination and self-reliance. Herons know what is best for themselves, and have the innate wisdom of being able to manoeuvre through life and co-create their own circumstances. Those with the Medicine of the Great Blue Heron may sit until the rest of us lose patience. And, when they follow the promptings of the heart, they are one of the most magnificent when they choose to soar.*



### JOHN HAYES WRITES:

Keith was the heart and soul, the sum and substance of Friends. Everything he did was out of a devotion to the Shawangunks. What always struck me was the fact that he never looked for the spotlight. He just worked hard

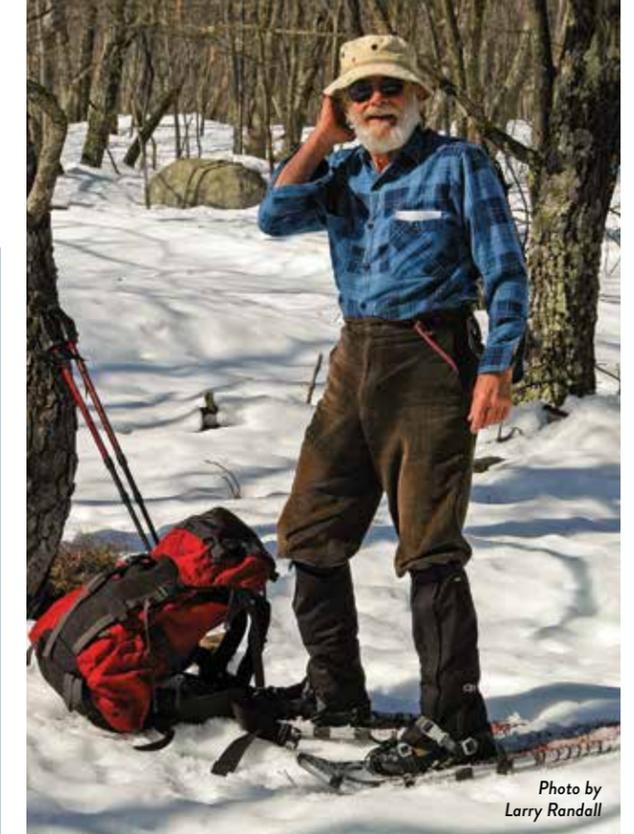


Photo by  
Larry Randall

and enjoyed the land. The other thing I admired was that he didn’t care who he butted heads with in his quest to keep the land pristine—a quality I wish I had a little more of. That was Keith. Devoted. Courageous.

### BOB ANDERBERG WRITES:

Years ago, Friends of the Shawangunks purchased a small but important parcel of land on the Shawangunk Ridge at tax sale. The organization quickly scraped together what it thought might be the sale price of the desired parcel and prepared to bid at auction. On the way to the sale, concerned that he might not have enough cash on hand to meet the deposit requirement, Keith found an ATM and started pulling cash from his personal account.

### STEVE JERVIS WRITES:

He was an inspiration to all of us who care about the Shawangunks. Although we had both been around the cliffs for a long time, I did not really know Keith until 10 or 12 years ago, when we climbed together for the first time. Because he was a bit older than me, I wondered whether he would have trouble keeping up with me. It turned out the other way around. I could barely follow where Keith led. Once I had to be lowered by him when I couldn’t get up at all.

It was Keith who recommended me for the Friends board, where I have served for more than six years. His role in the organization was crucial and will be long remembered by all those who cherish the Gunks.

*In summary, from Keith's obituary, Keith's "being" will be sorely missed—his joy in living life to the fullest; his enthusiasm for rock climbing, biking, X-C skiing, and firewood harvesting; the deep connections he felt with his close friends; and his unbridled and irreverent sense of humor.*

# Thomas Nozkowski 1944-2019

by Joyce Robins Nozkowski and Casimir Robins Nozkowski

Thomas Nozkowski was an artist who lived next to the Shawangunk Ridge, serving on the board of Friends of the Shawangunks from 1998-2018. He walked all his life starting as a child with his father on Sugarloaf Mountain in Orange County, parts of which extended onto his grandfather's farm. His mother's family was from



Photo by Joyce Robins Nozkowski, Wurtsboro 2017

Kingston and West Hurley. In 1974, Tom began exploring the ridge and subsequently bought a house in High Falls with Casimir and me, adjacent to the Mohonk Preserve.

Tom Nozkowski had a lifelong fascination and love affair with the Shawangunk Ridge. He spent much of his adult life wandering its ancient trails, faint pathways, dark ravines, rocky summits, and little known mysterious corners. Nothing escaped his attention.

Years ago we found ourselves (along with our wives, Elaine and Joyce) bushwacking in the extensive and remote back country of the Sam's Point Preserve – a seemingly endless tableau of slab rock, talus, pitch pines and mountain laurel. We were lost, and literally crawling through the dense vegetation on a blisteringly hot August day, trying to decipher the landscape and figure out where we were.

I was mortified, and worried that we would never emerge in one piece. But at that moment I looked at Tom and realized that for him it was the perfect moment of a perfect day. We were deep into the heart of the Shawangunks, exhausted and overheated, and something new and magical – a stream, vista, cliff or pitch pine barrens – lay just around the corner. —Bob Anderberg

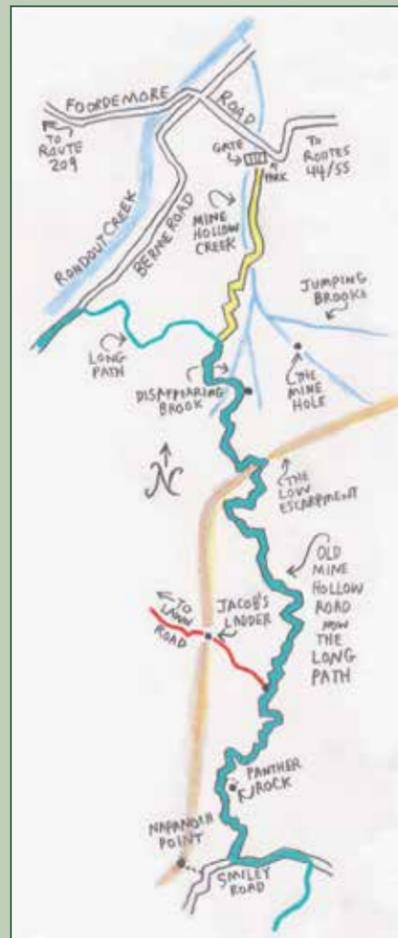
He loved to discover old trails and ways of connecting them with more traveled routes. He had an uncanny ability to see paths that had disappeared by intuiting where they should be based on patterns of use. Hiking with him was a process of discovery and excitement. He was always looking for new ways to see in the forest.

As an artist, Tom used these experiences to enrich his paintings, often finding subject matter in the smallest details or largest vistas in the landscape that he loved. While his artworks were mostly untitled, Sam's Point and the Katy Kill – to name two of his favorite destinations – clearly meant so much to him that he named two of his most important paintings after them. He used his drawing skill to make maps and share his discoveries and his love of local history to research how the ridge and surrounding villages had developed over time.

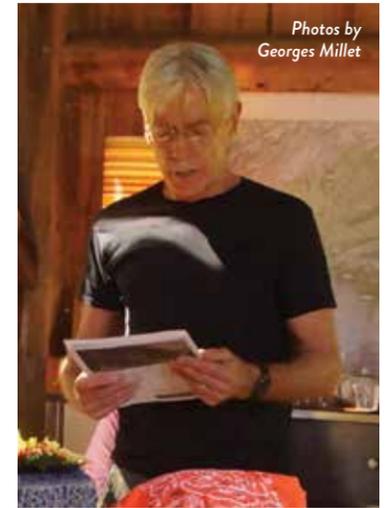
Tom joined Friends of the Shawangunks to help preserve this wonderful landscape. He redesigned the FOS newsletter to show the beauty of the ridge, using his experience as a graphic artist. He was passionate about saving the land. Often he would walk on land that was newly purchased by FOS and The Open Space Institute and draw a map with descriptions, then write an article about what he saw there and put it in the newsletter. He was happy about the Rail Trail developments and was interested in the connections to be made between the parallel rail lines.

Thomas died on May 9 after a long illness. He was buried in Benton Bar Cemetery. He found that landscape with

the Kripplebush Creek nearby while looking to descend into Pompey's Cave with his son. The creek has fallen below its bed and can be heard at particular points where there are openings in the surface so you can hear the water rushing along below. It is a lively and mysterious feature. It fits perfectly as his resting place.



*Thomas Nozkowski served on the FOS/TSC boards for twenty years. He was deeply in love with the ridge, and passionate about preserving it. He was especially interested in exploring the lesser known and sometimes abandoned trails above Napanoch and Ellenville. He shared his intimate knowledge through a series of maps that he drew and that were reproduced in this newsletter over the years. This map accompanied an article he wrote titled "Hiking Mine Hollow to Panther Rock."*



Photos by Georges Millet

## GETTING TOGETHER: SPRING MIXER

We had perfect weather for the several dozen members and friends of Friends who gathered for our May 18 event on Lawrence Hill in Accord. About half the attendees arrived early in order to join Bob Anderberg (of Open Space Institute) for a stimulating hike to Fox Hollow, an area of the ridge with some archetypal Shawangunk crevices and many abandoned millstone quarries. They returned to a sumptuous spread hosted by Bob and FOS board treasurer Elaine Laflamme in their impeccably restored barn. Both board president John Hayes and Bob spoke about the Shawangunk Conservancy's Small Parcel Acquisition Program, and the need to continue to raise funds for land preservation.

Many thanks to Elaine and Bob for arranging such a special day.



## ANNUAL MEETING: SAVE THE DATE

Our next gathering will be the annual meeting, traditionally held on the Sunday following Columbus Day weekend. Please, save the date: October 20, 10 am. We'll be meeting at the lovely and historic Clove Free Chapel located at 984 County Route 6 in High Falls. We will update members on any recent goings on in the southern Gunks, Minnewaska State Park and our land purchase program. Plans include a short hike to view our newest land purchase (i.e., Brooks). We will car pool to the Brooks walk. Afterwards, there are lots of other options near the chapel: hike up behind the chapel to the Outback Slabs, or across the road and over to Mohonk's Spring Farm, with its many trails.

Alert: the chapel is not heated. Wear clothes appropriate to mid October.





Drawing courtesy of Open Space Institute

# FOS Helps Fund a New Visitor Center at Lake Minnewaska

By Joe Raiola

Friends of the Shawangunks has made a generous contribution to the Open Space Institute (OSI) in support of a new Visitor Center at Minnewaska State Park Preserve. The construction of the long-needed facility is a public-private project of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Palisades Park Interstate Commission, and OSI.

Board President John Hayes writes, “With its white cliffs, pristine wilderness, stunning waterfalls and miles of hiking trails, Minnewaska is the greatest treasure of the Shawangunks. FOS is very proud to make a meaningful contribution for the Visitor Center for a park that we were instrumental in creating.”

A long time in coming, this extensive project was announced in the fall of 2015 when a plan was presented to transform the visitor experience at the park. OSI pledged to raise \$5 million for the Visitor Center, which will serve the more than 400,000 visitors to the park preserve each year. There is no question that as the park has grown into a well-known world-class outdoors destination, it has outgrown its minimal existing facilities.

Phase 1 of the project, which is near completion as we go to press, includes improvements to parking lots, new walkways, railings and signage, new stonework and landscaping, a new sewer system to serve the planned Visitor Center, and new stormwater infrastructure. Phase 2 of the project, which is on track to begin this summer, will include breaking ground by OSI for the Visitor Center.

FOS believes that Minnewaska State Park Preserve has long been in need of a welcoming space to greet and guide visitors and, perhaps more importantly, teach them about the

Shawangunks' many wonders and history. An essential part of that history, which will be told at the Visitor Center, is the vitally important role that FOS and other conservation organizations played in the protection and acquisition of Lake Minnewaska in 1987 from major development, and in further expansion of the park over the years since then. If all goes according to schedule, the Visitor Center will open in the fall of 2020. It will include a public patio with a view of the lake, educational exhibits, a warming hearth for winter visitors, drinking water, and restrooms that will be open in all seasons.

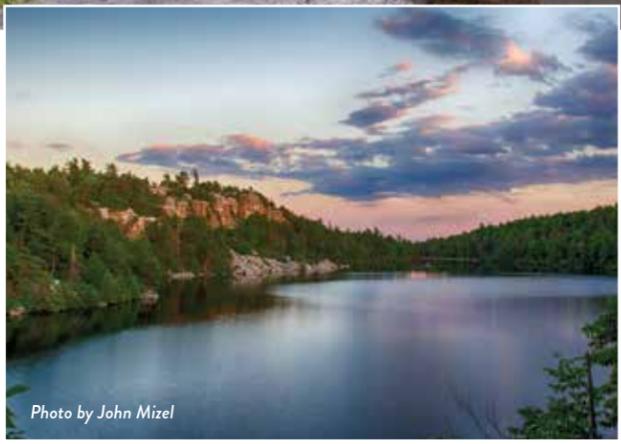


Photo by John Mizel

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR TRAIL STEWARD PROGRAM AT MINNEWASKA

Minnewaska State Park Preserve is recruiting volunteers to help protect the fragile and stunningly beautiful landscape of Minnewaska State Park Preserve. As an increasingly popular destination for visitors, the Park Preserve is comprised of 23,000 acres of outstanding natural communities featuring picturesque Sky Lakes, waterfalls, unique plant communities, and breath taking vistas. Visitors of all abilities and ambition have access to these natural gems via an extensive network of historic carriage roads and hiking trails. Visitor numbers are increasing each year, adding stress on the natural communities and Park Preserve staff.

The goal of the Trail Steward Program is to mitigate the degradation of trails and lands by providing experienced trail users an opportunity to engage directly with inexperienced hikers about safe and responsible use of the trails. Stewards will be stationed on popular footpaths on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day to Thanksgiving.

Questions? Contact Laura Conner at [laura.conner@parks.ny.gov](mailto:laura.conner@parks.ny.gov) or 845-255-0752.

# Scats Along the Trail

by Jean Lerner

Walking alone on the Ridge in an older body, I tend to be very careful where I put my feet. So I notice what's on the ground. There's surprisingly little garbage, but that doesn't mean that everyone leaves nothing but footprints.

Take, for instance, this nicely symmetric offering, found exactly in the middle of the trail, by the way, where only the most inattentive hiker would step in it. The amateur scientist in me wants to know what animal left this. Hum. All that hair means that it's not



a vegetarian, and the pointy ends immediately rule out dog and raccoon. Being prominently deposited for all to see suggests coyote or fox. Once home I rummage my bookcase and find “Guide to Animal Tracking and Behavior” (by Donald & Lillian Stokes), which turns out to be not as helpful as one would hope, i.e.: “In areas where both fox and coyotes live, only careful measurement of the diameter of the scats can give you a clue to the animal's identity.” Smaller diameter “probably is” fox, larger “probably” coyote. To further confuse the issue (so to speak), Stokes goes on to say that “The scats of bobcats are very similar in shape and size to those of fox and coyote, so much so that it is impossible to identify them positively.” Huh. However, bobcats often bury their leavings, so maybe they can be ruled out. Reading further, I learned that even fisher scats can be confused with these other animals.

On the other hand, this large, moist deposit is unquestionably bear. Although bear will eat virtually anything, this one has clearly been focusing on berries. On the far right is what looks to be a



nearly intact blueberry. I have no idea what all those other seeds are.

A blue berry is also featured in this coiled specimen, along with what looks to be a corn kernel. But, just one corn kernel? Doesn't seem likely.



But, if corn suggests that wildlife on the top of the ridge has been visiting the homes and farms below, this last pile is further evidence. Along with a piece of the red, white, and blue left over from the 4th of July, there



are lots of sunflower seeds, possibly from a birdfeeder, possibly from a farm field. The odd appearance of this scat also suggests that plastic bag material and other garbage is mixed in, but unfortunately I didn't do my scientific duty here.

In conclusion: watch your step.

Photos by the author

## TILLSON LAKE: DAM MIGHT COST LESS

The draining of Tillson Lake just got a little less likely with the announcement of an independent engineering study that was commissioned by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Schnabel Engineering estimated that repairing the dam would cost \$3.2 million, a far cry from the original cost of \$5 to \$9 million cited by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) last year. At that time, PIPC estimated that removing the dam would cost the state \$1 to \$2 million, *not counting* the restoration of the drained area. PIPC has not yet issued an estimate for the restoration. This new information means that the decision to save the lake vs removing the dam may hinge on factors other than cost.

NOTE: FOS has not taken a position on this issue.

## SOUTHERN GUNKS UPDATE

by Grace Woodard

Since the April 10th Public Hearing on Dragon Springs' (DS) Draft Environmental Impact statement, two responses have resulted. First, in May, the Planning Board unanimously voted to require Dragon Springs to do a Supplemental EIS on major issues - storm water runoff, waste water treatment plans, construction, water sources, and the traffic study, the very issues Deerpark Rural Alliance (DRA), their consultants, and the public noted in said presentations. Second, the DEC, in its report the end of May, reviewed the DEIS and declared the application incomplete. The DEC had multiple issues with DS plans: the dam, mitigating stream disturbance, threatened and endangered species, historic preservation and also the still incomplete parts of DS's 2016 application! DS's new response is not expected until the fall at the earliest. It is quite possible there will be another public hearing.

In the meantime, DRA has continued to scrutinize and photograph additional plumes into the Basha Kill and Neversink from a DS unnamed stream. DRA reports these incidents to DEC and notes DEC inspections.

Galley Hill Road Mall, a previous plan for a commercial project, has resurfaced. This proposal dates back to 2016. The developer submitted a revised plan this year, but since meeting with opposition, he has not been back to the Town for three months. The new plan, a suburban vision on a narrow, winding, rural road includes seven buildings with 21 apartments over shops and 120 parking spaces on flat, sloping and steeply sloping wet terrain. The same issues exist as before: well source, impact on nearby houses, water treatment location, run off, treated wastewater going into nearby Lake Helen at the base of the Shawangunk Ridge and into the Basha Kill. The applicant has not been back for three months. DRA is watching this project closely.

*Grace Woodard is a co-founder of Deerpark Rural Alliance*

# Shawangunk Watch

is the publication of Friends of the Shawangunks and its companion organization, The Shawangunk Conservancy. This issue was edited and assembled by Friends board members.

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

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