

# Shawangunk WATCH

FALL/WINTER 2022

VOLUME 27 NUMBER 2

**FRIENDS OF THE SHAWANGUNKS AND  
THE SHAWANGUNK CONSERVANCY**

**FIRES ON THE MOUNTAIN**

**Paula Medley 1945-2022**

**Gardiner Controversies**

*Protecting Open Space in the Shawangunks since 1963*



## LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY HONORS OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE AND BOB ANDERBERG

*The Delaware & Hudson Canal Historical Society held its first Heroes of the Hudson celebration at the Mohonk Mountain House on Sunday, June 1. The award is given to an organization and/or person that has made outstanding conservation achievements in the Hudson Valley area.*

As most of our members know, Open Space Institute (OSI) has been the leader in nationwide land conservation efforts, including over 80,000 acres in the Hudson Valley, with many of those efforts right here on the Shawangunk Ridge. Bob Anderberg, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, has been the chief architect of much of the organization's conservation successes in the Hudson Valley and the Shawangunks.

"Bob's unfailing passion for protecting this remarkable region is matched only by his skill, ingenuity, and patience as he knit together an astonishing portfolio of conservation achievements over the past 40 years which we will celebrate long into the future." An avid hiker and biker, Anderberg is committed to creating



*Left to right: Peter Bienstock, President, D and H Canal Historical Society; Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Kim Elliman, CEO, OSI, Bob Anderberg. Photo: Courtesy D&H Canal Historical Society.*

and expanding greenway trails that connect prized parks and other protected land. His extraordinary vision and accomplishments in this area have laid the groundwork for the creation of increasingly popular long-distance trail networks that have

become important elements in efforts to promote local tourism and economic development. Bob also serves as chair of the D&H Canal Historical Society Advisory Board.

It was a festive evening, with entertainment provided by Jay Unger and Molly Mason, local musicians most famous for their song "Ashokan Farewell." Contrary to popular belief, the song was not written for Ken Burns's "The Civil War" documentary, but about the 374-acre Ashokan Center, which was preserved with the help of Bob and OSI.

Friends of the Shawangunks was proud to be a participant in the event in honor of Bob, a former FOS founder and board chair, who has tirelessly helped us preserve many acres.

BY JOHN HAYES

## FOS CELEBRATES

### ON SUNDAY, MAY 22, FOS MEMBERS GATHERED TO CELEBRATE THE PURCHASE OF THE SHAWANGUNK CONGLOMERATE PARCEL AND ITS CONVEYANCE TO THE MOHONK PRESERVE.

We wanted to say "thanks!" to our members who helped make it happen. (See the Spring 2022 *Shawangunk Watch*.) Mohonk Preserve provided the Slingerland Pavilion at Spring Farm for the location, and the weather cooperated. It was a little early in the day for libation, so we made do with coffee, bagels and various treats.

Our guest speaker representing the Conglomerate group (who sold the parcel) was David Clark; speakers representing Mohonk Preserve were Julia Solomon, Director of Conservation Programs, and Ed Pestone, Land

Protection and GIS Manager. Julia and Ed spoke about the importance of the land purchase, as well as the tremendous value of land protection on the Shawangunk Ridge.

Last speaker but certainly not least was Bob Anderberg, Vice President and General Counsel of the Open Space Institute. Bob spoke passionately not only about Shawangunk land preservation in general, but also about all the recent accomplishments by OSI in protecting large tracts on and around the Shawangunk Ridge as well as other important efforts like the rail trails

surrounding the ridge and beyond.

For an added treat afterward, FOS member and Naturalist Michael Rider led a hike around the Spring Farm trails, pointing out the wildflowers currently in bloom along the trails of the Mohonk Preserve.

Overall, it was a stimulating and fun day. And once again, our thanks go out to the FOS membership for helping to make this land purchase possible!

*P.S. We are not resting on our laurels. There are other projects in the works, so please keep those donations coming!*

# CLOVES

*The Clove, one of the most beautiful as well as historically and ecologically significant areas in the Shawangunks, is dogged by some misnomers where place names are concerned.*

BY ANKA ANGRIST

Two small side roads off Clove Valley Road, Nutmeg and Ginger, were seemingly named by cooks unable to control their enthusiasm for creations infused with exotic spices. Wrong! The names are the result of misinterpretations on the part of developers of the former farmland in the valley—"the Clove" as the spice, instead of the Dutch "het Kloof," meaning cleft or valley. This disregard for accurate nomenclature has continued. Road signs that say Clove Valley Road are actually saying Valley Valley Road. Huh? The confusion is further increased by the short and steep side road named Clove Valley Road Extension, which merges at the crest of the hill with...Clove Road. To add to the confusion is Old Clove Road, which runs from Cherry Hill Road to Clove Road.

These inaccuracies have not hampered the Clove's value as a unique area. The Clove itself is bisected by Clove Valley Road which extends from the intersection of Clove and Mountain Roads at one end and continues for almost five miles to its terminus at Route 44/55.

Clove Road provides access to a number of Gunks attractions, including spectacular views of cliffs such as the Outback Slabs, the historic Clove Chapel and the Undivided Lot trail, which goes from the Chapel to Coxing Trailhead, with access to swimming in the Coxing Kill pool known as Split Rock and numerous rock climbs and trails.

A public road as early as 1798, paving of Clove Valley Road has resulted in the road's transformation as a shortcut to Routes 44/55.

Along Clove Valley Road are a CSA farm (Community Supported Agriculture) as well as a variety of homes ranging

from historic structures to small cottages. Portions of the surrounding acreage have been preserved via conservation easements and donations to the Mohonk Preserve. Some of the preserved parcels were acquired through the diligence of Friends of the Shawangunks.

Still extant on the road are a few homes that belonged to individuals who were followers of Father Divine, an African-American preacher who advocated for and pursued racial equality and casual socialization unusual in the 1960's. These residences were the property of African-Americans who followed his tenets. Several of these individuals were employed at the Mohonk Mountain House.

One resident, Wilbur Smith, or "Smitty" built a hotel and named it Smitty's Dude Ranch. Smitty's was one of the few Black owned businesses in the area in the 1960's. A visit to Smitty's was a relaxed affair.

Another Clove Road "destination" was Wickie Wackie, also a Black owned resort. Wickie Wackie was a more formal establishment, and it promoted dancing, which Smitty's did not.

Split Rock, a pool at the end of a rock chasm in the Coxing Kill, has long been a favored location for those longing for a cool dip. Parking and admission to Split Rock and numerous hiking trails are available at the Coxing Trailhead administered by the Mohonk Preserve. At Split Rock, visitors can also view and learn about Split Rock as an early farm and mill site owned by the Enderly family. Traces of the Enderly farmhouse and burial grounds are visible and described on placards.

Whatever a visitor's personal interests might be, the Clove probably has something to offer.



## The Mountains and the Valley Echo Her Name

*Our beautiful Earth has lost one of its champion environmentalists with the passing of Paula Medley on September 12th. Her efforts on behalf of the Shawangunk Mountains and the surrounding region were extraordinary. She was a veritable force of and for nature! Come, follow her path.*

BY SUSAN ERNY

PHOTO: KEVIN KREISCHER



Michael and Paula Medley

Paula's life of service began when, as a college graduate, she joined AmeriCorps VISTA in Louisiana, then continued as a supervisor at a home for disadvantaged children in Millbrook, NY. While working there, she met her prince, Michael Medley, another service-oriented soul. After they wedded in 1976 they moved to their very special mountaintop home in Cragsmoor.

Cragsmoor is where Paula's environmental chapter began. She and Mike joined the Cragsmoor Association (CA), a neighborhood environmental group. The group was first formed to help save Bear Hill, a popular local spot with a spectacular scenic overlook, from subdivision.

The most preposterous scheme that Paula fought against came in 1984 when Genro Energy System had a plan to erect up to 500 98-foot-high windmills atop the Shawangunk mountains near Sam's Point. A battle ensued with the village of Ellenville, who saw it as a pollution-free, alternative energy source that could benefit the village financially. However, the proposal ran into a huge wall when topnotch environmentalists banded together to stop Genro: Bob Anderberg of Open Space Institute (OSI), Sarah Johnson, then Friends of Shawangunks (FOS) president, NYS Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey, and Paula, who'd become the president of CA. Paula had learned quickly about the power of SEQRA: the State Environmental Quality Review Act. She organized the community and raised enough funds to bring a court action. She connected with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission for help with the legal process. The strategy worked: the project was dropped and Sam's Point eventually became part of Minnewaska State Park Preserve. "Networking" became Paula's mantra after that victory.

Under Paula's leadership, 1984-1995, CA defeated a number of other development projects on the mountain. For example, in 1992 a proposal for dirt-bike racing on Mount

Meenagha in Cragsmoor was stopped. Her final work in Cragsmoor dealt with OSI's very involved purchase of Ice Caves Mountain, Sam's Point and the Ellenville Watershed Tract. She was also instrumental in formulating the first Master Plan for the Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Now all of us have that exceptionally beautiful mountaintop park to visit, thanks to the efforts of OSI, Paula, CA, FOS, and a whole host of dedicated environmentalists.

In 1997 Paula and Mike moved to a log house in Westbrookville overlooking the Basha Kill wetlands. Now they were residents in the Town of Mamakating, and quickly became members of the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA). Shortly thereafter, Mike began leading guided hikes and canoe tours of the Basha Kill.

In 2001 Paula and Mike became actively involved with BKAA during Mamakating's work on its Master Plan. A huge fight with the town ensued over the issue of spot zoning the Shawangunk Ridge, Catskill Ridge and Yankee Lake, which would have allowed significant development. Attorneys were hired for an Article 78 proceeding; the NY/NJ Trail Conference, Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Yankee Lake Preservation Association, Wurtsboro Hills Community Association, Cragsmoor Association and hundreds of local people were all enlisted in the battle.

In 2004, Paula accepted the position as President of BKAA, just in time to defend the Basha Kill from a flurry of development proposals. The most significant were:

- Kohl's Distribution Center proposed a 500,000-square-foot warehouse along Route 209 in the pristine valley.
- Yukiguni Maitake Mushroom Plant sought to build an 825,000-square-foot structure on Route 209 with operations drawing 621,000 gallons per day from the pure aquifer.

- Over many years, multiple proposals for the Shawanga Lodge property on top of the Shawangunk Ridge came and went. It grew from 220 acres to 340. The last proposal envisioned a massive resort/casino, which would require withdrawal of 600,000 gallons of water per day, with waste discharge into the Basha Kill or Shawangunk Kill.
- Seven Peaks was to be a gated community of 49 houses of 8,500-square feet on five-acre lots on the eastern and western slopes of the Shawangunks above the Basha Kill, along with a hotel, conference center, spa and restaurants.
- Plans for Wurtsboro Airport/Commerce Park were for either a campus-like business park, 48 upscale houses with a hotel, or massive warehouses.
- Thompson Education Center (TEC) aka China City of America (CCA) encompassed 2,181 acres. Brainstormed by Sherry Li, TEC would be a for-profit college, a conference center, a recreational facility, a Chinese Disneyland and/or more. TEC claimed there would be no adverse environmental impacts.

Using the now well-learned tools of the trade (Article 78's, Environmental Impact Statements, expert testimony, relentless community pressure, etc.) BKAA and others were successful in defeating all but one of these plans (Kohl's). The Shawanga Lodge property was recently purchased by OSI. The Seven Peaks property was divided into a few large lots (still undeveloped), and OSI purchased a corridor through it to fill a gap in The Shawangunk Ridge Trail. Huz'zah! As for TEC/CCA, Sherry Li was arrested earlier this year for "defrauding investors in her fictitious project." Justice prevails!

Paula was an inspirational leader and writer. Part of her legacy is that during her tenure, membership in BKAA doubled. (All of this without knowing how to drive or use a computer!) About small local organizations going up against powerful adversaries, Paula said, "Remember, this is not a hopeless situation. We are not helpless."

In gratitude to her, we can carry on the work of protecting our precious environment. We will miss her very much.

SUSAN ERNY was a member of the BKAA Board 2001-2013 and the FOS Board 2014-2018.

Resource Credits: BKAA GUARDIAN; "Evolution of a Medley," Annie O'Neill, *Shawangunk Watch* (winter, 2004); "Upstate Windmill Project Churns up Dispute," Harold Faber, *NY Times* 4/23/1984; discussions with Jack & Hattie Grifo; CA tribute to Paula, [www.cragsmoorassociation.com/hof-2012-paula-medley](http://www.cragsmoorassociation.com/hof-2012-paula-medley).

## IN MEMORY of A TRUE ADVOCATE

BY ROBERTA CLEMENTS

PAULA MEDLEY led the Basha Kill Area Association for many years both as a spokesperson and behind the scenes. I met Paula back in the early 2000's when I was Conservation Chair for the Mid Hudson Sierra Club. The way I remember her, she was a hearty soul with a contagious giggle and bright eyes that took it all in. I went to a town board meeting in support of the BKAA when the Basha Kill was still unprotected. It was a full house that night with probably 75 people in attendance. We listened to the board "pooh pooh" all the comments. When it was my turn to speak, I called out the Supervisor for talking when I talked. I was so mad my mommy voice and teacher voice came out all at once and I told him to cut it out! Paula found me after the meeting and the smile she

*"The way I remember her, she was a hearty soul with a contagious giggle and bright eyes that took it all in."*

gave when she approached me is etched in my memory. She was so proud of me—it was the greatest gift imaginable! She had no idea how much it meant to me to have that happy encouragement to keep on fighting the good fight. Paula fought the good fight in the Hudson Valley and her work will have a positive impact on Wurtsboro and the Ridge, and flows out to the world like the water she protected.

God Bless You Paula, you're beautiful inside and out and I'll never forget your bright eyes, peaceful smile, and sacred spirit.



# Shawangunk Ridge developments spark controversy over code enforcement in Gardiner

*The disputes touch on issues of conservation, property rights and tourism.*

*“The land is being loved to death.”*

BY WILL SOLOMON | AUGUST 30, 2022 | EXCERPTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE *TIMES UNION*

PHOTO: JOHN HAYES

**G**ARDINER — Several land use disputes between property owners, environmentalists and the town government are roiling this small Ulster County town, touching on issues of environmental conservation, the rights of property owners and tourism in the Hudson Valley.

The disputes, including two cases on the world-renowned Shawangunk Ridge—home of the Mohonk Preserve and Minnewaska State Park, and what the Nature Conservancy has called one of the “last great places” on Earth—have also led town residents to ask why the town government has been so lenient in enforcing regulations.

“Over 27 million people live within 100 miles of the northern Shawangunks,” said John Hayes, president of the environmental advocacy group, Friends of the Shawangunks. “This presents enormous difficulties in keeping the land preserved in its natural state. If we want to secure the Shawangunk Ridge for the recreation and enjoyment of future generations, we have to continue to take steps to protect it now.”

Ultimately, the resolution of these conflicts will help to set precedents for how stringently the town’s environmental protections can be applied—and to what degree businesses that flout permitting regulations can be penalized.



## AN EXCLUSIVE ‘GLAMPING’ CLUB

The first case concerns the Awosting Club, a membership-only “glamping” club on the Shawangunk Ridge that has been out of compliance with town permitting regulations for well over a year, according to town meeting notes and documents shared with the Times Union.

Neighbors say the club has built unpermitted structures over the last two years, including large geodesic domes on platforms, with electricity. They have expressed particular concerns about structures’ proximity to the Palmaghatt Stream, one of the most ecologically sensitive sites on the Shawangunk Ridge.

Despite efforts by the town in 2021 to bring the club into compliance, including at least one site visit by the town’s former building inspector, Andrew Lewis, who issued a 30-day ultimatum for the club to submit a site plan and campground application on April 26—it is not clear that the club has fulfilled either of these permitting obligations. (Lewis declined to comment for this article; the current building inspector, Bruce Terwilliger, did not respond to a request for comment.)

The April attempt was not the only significant move in 2021 to force Awosting into compliance: on July 22, Lewis issued a notice of violation demanding Awosting apply for a campground license within 30 days,

writing that failure to do so would be penalized. It is not clear why the demand for a site plan was dropped in the notice of violation; it is also unclear whether any ticket was ever issued, and the club continues to operate.

“It is shameful, it is inexplicable, and it is confounding how and why the Awosting Club is still in operation without permits, without fines, without consequences, and without a cease-and-desist order,” said Janet Kern, a town resident and member of Gardiner’s Environmental Conservation Commission, an all-volunteer town commission tasked with protecting Gardiner’s natural resources. “Why is there no cease-and-desist order for an illegal commercial operation on the ridge? There has never been an answer to that question.”

Asked about the issue, Town Supervisor Marybeth Majestic said: “The town has been working towards compliance with respect to the Awosting Club. At present, the town is evaluating its options with respect to enforcement activity.”

The Awosting Club is owned by Camilla Bradley. Her father, John Bradley, who passed away in 2021, once owned over 2,000 acres on the Shawangunk Ridge.

In 2002, John Bradley’s intention to develop much of this land into over 300 luxury housing units and a private golf course met with strong opposition from locals. The “Save the Ridge” movement ultimately succeeded in protecting the bulk of the land, which was sold to New York State and incorporated into Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

## STRICT RIDGE ZONING IN GARDINER

The “Save the Ridge” campaign did more than conserve much of John Bradley’s land. The effort also

led to strict zoning regulations for development in Gardiner’s section of the Shawangunk Ridge. Among other restrictions, the “Shawangunk Ridge Protection District” divides the land into zones SP-1 through SP-3, with SP-3 being the steepest and most restrictive to develop.

Matt Bialecki, a local architect and former town board member who helped to draft the ridge zoning code, says the changes were substantial, and “rezoned over 9,000 acres of sensitive forest, talus slope and ecologically sensitive lands.” The changes affected nearly 500 landowners on the ridge.

Notably, he says, the rezoning faced no legal challenges. “When it was passed ... it was hailed as very progressive landmark conservation,” says Bialecki. “I consider it a monumental achievement, and it was a monumental achievement for the community.”

A second case on the ridge more directly touches on the new zoning regulations. In that case, Friends of the Shawangunks has filed suit to stop the development of a single-family home. The case involves a property owner, John Alexander, who was granted a permit by the town to build in the SP-2 zone on his property.

The case is being handled by the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace Law School, which offers pro bono representation for environmental suits. A preliminary hearing in the state Supreme Court in Kingston is expected in early fall.

Pace law student Daniel Krupa, who is working on the case, said the planning board should not have approved Alexander’s application, believing that development on ecologically sensitive portions of the ridge will set a “harmful precedent” for other developers.

“In the (Shawangunk Ridge Protection District) section, it unambiguously states that ‘permitted construction (shall) occur at the lowest feasible elevation on the property,’” he said, adding that since Alexander’s parcel spans all three zoning districts, he must construct at the lowest elevation available.

Supervisor Majestic only briefly commented on the case. “The town is not inclined to comment on matters that are in litigation,” she said.

## A LIMITED GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

After years of complaints and contentious meetings, the town has begun to take steps to address residents’ concerns. On Aug. 9, the town board voted to seek legal counsel regarding the Awosting Club.

As far as the disputes on the Shawangunk Ridge, the pending Kingston court date for the Alexander case may help to affirm—or potentially weaken—restrictions in the ridge zoning code. At this point, the fate of the Awosting Club is less clear.

Environmentalists want to see action quickly. “The Palmaghatt stream is designated a sensitive stream, to say nothing of that whole area,” said Patty Lee Parmalee, who lives near the Awosting Club in the town of Shawangunk and was involved in the Save the Ridge efforts. “It’s not just a matter of wanting to preserve some scenery—it’s a matter of the health of the environment.”

Taking the long view, Hayes, Friends of the Shawangunks president, sees an enduring issue. “We are seeing encroachment on the (Shawangunk Ridge) like never before. The land is, unfortunately, being loved to death.”

# Shawangunk WATCH

is the publication of Friends of the Shawangunks and its companion organization, The Shawangunk Conservancy. This issue was written and edited by Friends board members Jean Lerner, John Hayes, Patty Lee Parmalee, Roberta Clements and Anka Angrist.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Hayes, *President*

Anka Angrist, *Vice President*

Jean Lerner, *Treasurer*

Patty Lee Parmalee, *Secretary*

Alex Bartholomew, Roberta Clements, Janet Kern,

Barbara Rubin, H. Neil Zimmerman

Friends of the Shawangunks, Inc.

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

The Shawangunk Conservancy, Inc.

is a not-for-profit land conservancy.

Email: FOSandTSC@gmail.com

Website: www.shawangunks.org

The latest financial report of Friends of the Shawangunks and The Shawangunk Conservancy may be obtained by writing to the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271, or by writing to us at the above address.

COVER PHOTO: NEW YORK STATE PARKS PARK SUPERVISOR ZACH WESLEY-KRUEGER

DESIGN: LINDA BARIS



FRIENDS of the SHAWANGUNKS  
Preserving Open Space Since 1963

PO Box 270  
Accord, NY 12404

Nonprofit Org  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Kingston, NY  
Permit No. 40402

## JOIN US! DEVELOPMENT THREATENS ALL PARTS OF THE SHAWANGUNKS. JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY.

Please use the envelope included with this newsletter, or visit us at [www.shawangunks.org](http://www.shawangunks.org) to conveniently donate online.

*If an "E" appears above your name on the mailing label it is time to renew your membership.*

## Drought + Heat = Fires on the Ridge

In late August residents of Ellenville and Napanoch spent days and nights in the Walmart and Shoprite parking lots transfixed by billowing clouds of smoke and bright flames that consumed 270 acres of ridgeland in the Napanoch Point/Witches Hole area of Minnewaska State Park.

For a while it seemed as though the entire ridge would burn. On August 21 a fire started in Cragsmoor. Further south in Mamakating (Sullivan County) 70 acres burned. While that was being brought under control, lightning struck Napanoch Point on August 27. On the 31st yet another fire started near the Stony Kill. The Cragsmoor and Stony Kill fires were quickly extinguished, burning only four acres between them.

But the Napanoch Point fire took more than 200 firefighters over a week to put out. The remote and rugged terrain made fighting the fire very difficult. Equipment had to be hauled some distance from the nearest carriage road. All the local fire departments participated in the battle, including Accord, Kerhonkson, Ellenville, Cragsmoor, Napanoch, Walker Valley, Mohonk Preserve; departments from Sullivan, Orange and Dutchess counties participated or were on standby. NYS Police, NYS Parks NYSDEC, NY Army National Guard, and even crews from as far away as Quebec helped.

Black Hawk helicopters ferried enormous buckets of water from Lake Maratanza to dump on the blaze. People in the communities supplied sandwiches, baked goods, coffee and other beverages to the work crews. In the end a downpour saved the day. Thus, the weather was responsible for both starting and ending this fire.

The extraordinary and well-coordinated response was partly the result of lessons learned. In 2008 more than 3,000 acres burned on the Ridge. Another 2,000 acres burned near Sam's Point in the spring of 2016.

Fires on the ridge pose something of a dilemma, since they are part of a natural process. The ridge-top ecology has been fire-dependent since the glaciers receded thousands of years ago. But fires must be put out to protect our homes.

BY JEAN LERNER

PHOTO: NY DEC

