

# 2016

## Annual Report

Investing in the Future

Watershed Agricultural Council  
nycwatershed.org





## **Our Mission:**

**To promote the economic viability of agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality, and the conservation of working landscapes through strong local leadership and sustainable public-private partnerships.**

Thank you to our collaborative partners: Soil and Water District of Delaware County, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency.

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# INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

## Protecting Farms, Forest, and Clean Water

The largest unfiltered public water supply system in the world is located in the Catskill region of New York State. Supplying more than 9.5 million NY residents with over one billion gallons of fresh drinking water every day, this gravity fed aqueduct system and Watershed also protects some of the country's most productive farms and forest lands. The Watershed Agricultural Council, an on-the-ground local organization of committed professionals, has used both science and law through economic and conservation strategies to protect the terroir of this

Watershed region for over 20 years. Because of this commitment and capacity, the Catskill Mountains are a source of unfiltered, safe and abundant drinking water to the Northeast's largest metropolitan city and simultaneously generates healthy local food and beverages and sustainably harvested wood and crafts from hundreds of rural businesses.

An outstanding result of two decades of intensive conservation and significant financial investment to protect the NYC water supply is a pristine environment to grow and cultivate agriculture and silvi-culture products. This investment to preserve the natural assets of the Catskills aligns directly with the unprecedented growth

of the local food movement and the demand for greater transparency in our food system. Today, small and midscale producers have a unique opportunity to successfully market their products to a community with unmet demand that creates trust-based relationships and offers all 'eaters' an ability to participate in conservation through consumption.

Like so many of us we recognize that our natural resources are central to our quality of life. We need fresh water to drink, clean air to breathe, healthy food to eat and economic prosperity to sustain our lives and communities. While 70% of the world is covered by water less than 1% of it is accessible and drinkable. The United Nations

estimates that by the year 2050 the world population will require 60% more food to sustain three billion more people. According to American Farmland Trust, in New York State, the equivalent of 4,000 farms have been paved over since the early 1980's, put differently, an average of three farms a week have been destroyed for over 30 years due to development.

These challenges require visionary thinking, planning, and ultimately solutions that build on a track record of results and push us to incorporate new thinking, as well as focusing on expanding land conservation balanced with economic opportunities.

Our region, in many respects, is further along the environmental continuum than

most regions throughout the United States. As an organization we have demonstrated not only a track record of success and a commitment as a region leader, but are also positioned to impact farms, forest and clean water into the future.

Join us as we protect farms, forest and clean water.

Sincerely,

*Craig J. Cashman,*  
*Executive Director*



# CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

## Conserving the Land, Preserving a Way of Life

In September the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) received a \$43 million dollar award from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. The funds will be utilized to “seed” an endowment and to safeguard agriculture and forestry ease-

ments over the next 20 years and beyond.

The Council has had a significant impact on the environment and the regional economy for over 20 years. Each of our service areas, Agriculture, Forestry, Conservation Easements, and Economic Viability, are a blend of our mission with the intent to strike a balance between water quality and economic viability.

The culture and lifeblood of

the Catskill region has always been about working landscapes, and protecting farmland and has been a priority for WAC since inception. The Conservation Easement Program has been one tool that the organization has been able to utilize to help save farms in the region. Conservation easements protect land for future generations by conditioning development and certain uses necessary to protect specific conservation values, such as water quality, while allowing for the retention of other rights and uses by a landowner. The easements are designed to allow for intensive commercial activities such as agriculture, timber harvests and blue-stone quarrying so long as those activities have a conser-



vation plan approved by WAC. Once an easement is signed, stewardship begins. Stewardship refers to all aspects of managing a conservation easement in perpetuity (after its acquisition). This includes but is not limited to monitoring; landowner relations; recordkeeping; processing landowner notices, reserved rights requests for approvals, and amendment requests; managing stewardship funds; as well as en-

forcement and legal defense. Conservation easements that allow for working landscapes are the most challenging and costly type of conservation easement to steward because of the many conditioned activities that may occur on a property.

This guaranteed funding is for stewarding the projected 30,000 acres of farm and forestry easements in the New York City Watershed in perpetuity.



“It makes it possible for this farm to remain a part of the working landscape beyond my time here... the stewardship endowment ensures that the land will be operated to conserve the soil and the clean drinking water into the future, and that unwise development of this piece of the earth will be prevented.”

RICHARD GILES, LUCKY DOG FARM



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

**25,736**

Acres Eased to date with 1,228 closed in 2016 and 1,773 currently in contract

**20**

Reserved Rights executed by easement landowners

**7**

Forest Harvest Plans on 400 acres yielding ~400,000 board feet of harvested trees

**6**

Livestock Crossing BMP Installations on easement farms associated with CREP re-enrollment

**2**

Stream Projects focusing on sediment transport and stream bank stabilization

# FORESTRY EDUCATION: INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

## Trees for Tribes

27 NYC students (plus chaperones) visited the Croton Watershed (Hilltop Hanover Farm, Yorktown Heights, NY) to plant streamside trees and learn about forests, water quality, and the NYC Watershed on a Watershed Forestry Trees for Tribes Bus Tour. The students are participants of the Green Girls (City Parks Foundation) and the School's Out NYC after-school programs.



## Trout in the Classroom

Students from Staten Island's Public School 57 release the trout they raised in their classroom all year into Biscuit Brook at Frost Valley YMCA. They are participants of Trout in the Classroom, a national program sponsored by Trout Unlimited. Trout release bus tour participants travel to the NYC Watershed to release their trout into streams that flow into drinking water reservoirs.



## Green Connections

2016-2017 Green Connections partner teachers kick-off the yearlong program with a special training at Clearpool Education Center. The Green Connections program fosters mutual understanding and friendship between students from New York City and the upstate NYC Watershed, while inspiring and enabling them to become excellent life-long stewards of forests and water quality.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

**80**

Forest owners assisted in enrolling 11,800 acres in NY's 480a Forest Tax Law

**60**

Miles of logging roads stabilized

**38**

Forest Stewardship projects completed, covering

**390**

Acres of Watershed forests

**5,000**

Users on MyWoodlot website with 70 activities offered

# FORESTRY

## Building Bridges and Relationships

In May the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) Forestry Program held a logger training workshop at the Siu-slaw Model Forest in Greene County New York. The agenda for this workshop was straightforward—to build three portable skidder bridges.

The bridges we built that day were unique because we didn't make them for any one logger; they were made for all of them. The bridges are destined to be loaned free of charge by WAC to dozens of loggers who need to cross streams in the NYC Watershed over the next five years.

Loaning bridges is one of the many ways the WAC Forestry Program helps loggers protect water quality. The Best Management Practice (BMP) Program provides money, materials and tech-

nical support to help loggers plan and apply water quality BMP's in the Watershed. It helps local loggers protect drinking water for 9 million New Yorkers.

The loggers who showed

up had different motivations. Some wanted to make their own bridge so they were there to practice before building their own. Others attended to get their continuing education credits for Trained Logger Certification (TLC), New York's logger training program. TLC recognizes loggers who are committed to logging safety, productivity and environmental issues. The WAC Forestry Program supports TLC in the Watershed region by hosting a variety of workshops, including Game of Logging.

Building portable skidder bridges takes a lot of materials and coordination. WAC purchased 81 oak and hemlock timbers, 63 five-foot threaded rods and over 250 nuts and washers. And that isn't all, the loggers showed

up with their sledgehammers, industrial drills, portable generators, extension cords, and impact wrenches. Whenever we needed a tool a logger would root through the gear-boxes on his truck and return with a few options.

The most valuable part of the workshop wasn't the bridges we made; it was the relationships we built. Working on a shared task and talking together throughout the day creates opportunity to get to know each other. This mutual understanding and appreciation for each other generates trust and confidence that is far more valuable than the "free labor" to make a bridge.



# ECONOMIC VIABILITY

## Expanding Market Opportunities

Each year, the Economic Viability Program supports numerous local events in a variety of ways including financial sponsorships, providing promotional avenues through social media, helping develop print materials, and much more. Through Pure Catskills a regional, buy local campaign developed by the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) to improve the economic viability of the local community, sustain working landscapes and preserve water quality in the NYC Watershed region, we attended/sponsored over 15 events in 2016 alone.

This year, we want to highlight two annual events we participate in, helping to foster new customer relationships while bringing our members profitability, and expanding their market opportunities.

One of our successful technical and marketing assistance events is the Cauliflower Festival held on September 24th in Margaretville, NY. This

old-fashioned country fair is held at the start of the colorful fall season, and offers a Pure Catskills sponsored tent filled with seven of our members selling products, programs on local food, history and agriculture, and entertainment for the entire family. It has become a signature event for our program with members returning each year.

The second successful event is Taste of the Catskills, held two weeks later on Columbus Day Weekend at Maple Shade Farm in Delhi, NY. The Taste of the Catskills Festival is a family-friendly event that showcases the diversity of the products coming from this region including food, beer, crafts and wine. This year, the Pure Catskills

tent was the largest we have had in the three years we have attended. With 20 vendors under our tent, we are continuing to collect data to show the positive impact both financially and informatively Taste of the Catskills has on our members businesses.

Tree Juice Maple Syrup's thoughts on Taste of the Catskills, "The Pure Catskills team was amazing! So nice to have such an incredible support network that really helps get our products out there. Best festival we attend."

With the continued growth and successes of 2016, we are already looking forward to next year!

*Wyatt Frisbee of Riverdale Farm and Forest enjoying the Cauliflower Festival.*



## PURE CATSKILLS MEMBERS AT EVENTS



“This is a fabulous event for us. Good Job Pure Catskills. What a great program and thank you for having us in your tent. Pure Catskills team was welcoming and organized as always. It’s always a pleasure.”

—KYMAR FARM WINERY AND DISTILLERY

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

**270**  
Pure Catskills  
Members

**55,000**  
2016-2017 *Guide to  
Pure Catskills Products*  
Printed/Distributed

**15+**  
Events Sponsored

**\$4,000+**  
Grossed by Pure  
Catskills Members  
at the Cauliflower  
Festival

**\$17,000+**  
Grossed by Pure  
Catskills Members at  
Taste of the Catskills

# NOTABLE PROJECTS IN 2016

## Streambank Repair/CREP

The eroding stream bank had washed out portions of the CREP fence prompting the need for a stream restoration.



The properly sized channel, a floodplain bench, and re-established CREP fence is seen in this photo.



## Cover Crops

Dairy cows on the Kuhn Farm in Roxbury, NY enjoyed the benefits of cover crops this past spring. The rye crops were planted in the fall of 2015 in harvested corn fields and grew over the winter. In the spring the cows grazed the fields and daily milk production increased.



## Covered Feeding Area

The Watershed Agricultural Program completed implementation of a covered feeding area and manure storage at the MacGibbon Farm in the late fall of 2015. The structure was planned to provide a feeding area for approximately 110 cow/calf pairs and 50 yearlings. It protects water quality by collecting and containing manure nutrients while conveying the clean rainwater safely away.



“They’ve done a tremendous amount of consulting for us. They test the soil, test the forage, help us with health issues, feed issues and our feeding program. It’s really important for the health and quality of the animal.”

—JOE EVANS, EVANS AND EVANS FARM

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

**288**  
Active West of  
Hudson Farms

**117**  
Farms Enrolled  
in Nutrient  
Management Credit

**45**  
Enrolled in Precision  
Feed Management

**92%**  
Farm Participation

**160,000**  
Acres of  
Farmland

# AGRICULTURE

## Farming with a Strong Conservation Ethic

Farming is a way of life in the NYC Watershed. Over the last 20+ years our farmers have worked with our conservation planners, technicians, nutrient management specialists and a slew of agricultural professionals to ensure water quality, increase production and decrease nutrient accumulation in the Watershed. A mix of Best Management Practices and Whole Farm Planning has been the key to success for this voluntary program.

In 2015, the Precision Feed Management (PFM) Program was launched. PFM is a pro-

cess of producing and managing feed for dairy cows that is geared towards improving forage quality, quantity and utilization, as well as balancing diets more precisely to meet the nutrient requirements of the animals. This in turn improves productivity and profitability, and reduces nutrient accumulations on the farm. In the last year 45 farms have enrolled with 23 plans complete to date.

One of the various ways the PFM program assists farmers is by evaluating and finding ways for the animals to receive more nutrients, in turn producing a higher volume of milk. This occurred in the form of cover crops at the Fred Kuhn farm in Roxbury, NY. Cover crops have multiple benefits including:

reducing soil erosion, increasing organic matter, capturing nutrients in the soil, increase biodiversity and providing supplemental forage to promote a higher forage diet for the animals. Mr. Kuhn planted cereal rye in the fall of 2015 in a recently harvested cornfield. In the spring of 2016 his cows were temporarily pastured in the cornfield to enjoy grazing on the new crop. Kuhn integrated a great stewardship practice on his farm and as a result his cows produced six additional pounds of milk per day while grazing the rye.

Another significant program in 2016 was the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) re-enrollments. CREP is a program administered by the USDA

*Brian LaTourette discusses Best Management Practices with Joe Evans on his farm in Andes, NY.*



Farm Service Agency that is cost shared 50% from the federal government and 50% from the Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP). The conservation practice that the NYC CREP program focuses on is installing riparian forest buffers. This program compensates landowners to fence their livestock from watercourses, then trees and shrubs are planted along the stream with the goal of establishing a forest. This future forest will filter nutrients and pathogens from reaching

the stream and improve the health of the stream ecology so nutrients that reach the water will be broken down and assimilated by the organisms that live in the stream.

The WAP in coordination with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) was able to re-enroll 19 contracts in 2015 for a total of 206 acres, and 43 contracts in 2016 for a total of 431 acres. In 2016 alone, WAP and FSA have identified and agreed to fund 83 conservation practices worth \$440,000 to be repaired in the 2017 season.

# EAST OF HUDSON

## Balancing Agriculture with a Growing Population

Based in Yorktown Heights, NY our East of Hudson office services the farms in the Croton Watershed. The Croton Watershed served as New York City's original upstate water supply, and remains home to 12 reservoirs and three controlled lakes and covers 375 square miles. As this area grows in population, it is a daily challenge to preserve the farms and to help them maintain water quality. Although the farms in the East of Hudson region differ from the farms in the West of Hudson, one thing remains



*Kristan Morley, Carrie Davis, Elaine Poulin and Heather Magnan attending the Old Salem Farm Spring Horse Show.*

the same; the desire to continue producing high quality products and remain economically viable. Agro-tourism, equestrian facilities, orchards, plant nurseries and greenhouses are just a few examples of the varieties of farms in the region.

Old Salem Farm is a 116-acre equestrian facility with 85 boarded horses and has been a WAC participant since 2004. The state of the art facility offers horse and rider training; commissioned horse sales and the best horse care available. The farm hosts over 25

shows a year, with thousands of offsite horses coming onto the property where they are stabled in temporary stalls within large tents. In May they held their Spring Horse Show, a two-week event in its 34th year featuring the top riders from across the country and over 2,000 exhibitor entries. Various BMPs ranging from a Composting Facility, Vegetated Treatment Area, and a Manure Dumpster Storage Pad were implemented to help manage manure and to control and treat manure runoff. As one of the premier facilities in the state, we are happy they share our conservation ethic.

Another East of Hudson participant is Katonah Nursery; a family run garden center offering retail services for



gardens and landscape design. The nine acre property is also being used to breed and raise pigs and goats. Runoff from the animal enclosures was causing a water quality issue, the East of Hudson staff was happy to come up with a solution. Several run-in sheds were designed and implemented, as well as a fenced in barnyard area away from hydraulically sensitive areas. This solution not only benefitted water quality by keeping waste out, but it was designed to positively impact and improve animal health.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

**68**  
**Active Whole Farm Plans**

**10,586**  
**Total acres East of Hudson**

## REVENUES JULY 1, 2015 – JUNE 30, 2016

Federal	\$489,382	(3.12%)
Donated Services	\$371,415	(2.37%)
Foundations & Other Grants	\$22,771	(0.15%)
Interest and Gain/Loss of Asset Sale	\$116	(0.00%)
NYC DEP	\$14,816,182	(94.37%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,699,866</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>

## EXPENDITURES JULY 1, 2015 – JUNE 30, 2016

Forestry Program	\$1,279,672	(8.17%)
Easement Program	\$3,854,278	(24.62%)
Watershed Agricultural Program	\$8,148,993	(52.05%)
Outreach Communications & Economic Viability	\$376,551	(2.41%)
Program Administration & Depreciation	\$1,624,181	(10.37%)
Donated Services	\$371,415	(2.37%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,655,090</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>



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# THINKING ABOUT TOMORROW

Drive around the Watershed after the snow has melted in March and look for the cornfields of the previous autumn; the brown stretches with the stalks either bent over from the combine, or chopped off close to the ground which became silage. That rough ground is becoming harder and harder to find, not because it's not there but because now those fields are green even in late winter. That green is a fall-planted cover crop, a Best Management Practice (BMP) WAC is helping farmers to adopt in order to protect their fields from erosion, bring numerous nutrient benefits to their animals and soil, as well as keeping the water clean. Living in the NYC Watershed and being a part of the vibrant work-

ing landscape means always thinking about tomorrow. Farm and forest land owners know what they do today will affect generations to come.

If you were to go into a forest after a WAC-supervised timber harvest you would find several BMP's used to protect the soil, the remaining trees, and prepare the forest to recover and grow even better than before. WAC has also created My Woodlot, an interactive website, so forest owners can learn what to do to improve the future of their forested lands. Planning is a vital part of maintaining a healthy forest for years to come.

Tomorrow is a concern for WAC itself. In 2016, we finished the process of updating our Strategic Plan. We asked ourselves—where will we be



and what should our focus be in the next 5 to 20 years? Planning for not only tomorrow, but beyond the here and now is a serious priority for us.

Our Easements, both Agricultural and Forestry, go on into perpetuity, which we are fond of saying. We were excited to announce this year that our Stewardship Endowment was established to help monitor eased lands in perpetuity. The Endowment ensures that tomorrow's Watershed landowners with a WAC Easement will have the help they need to make the best use of their resources.

I have difficulty picturing forever, but New York City is about 400 years old, so that length of time is not beyond our imagination. What will farming and forestry look like in our Watershed in the next 400 years? Thanks to our continued Agricultural, Forestry, Conservation Easements and Economic Viability efforts of preserving the working landscape, I would like to think that we will all still be enjoying an abundance of trees and farmland. As long as there are people living in New York City, the residents will need our water. This is a partnership that is equipped to continue on, because today, we started planning for tomorrow.

*Sally Fairbairn  
Council Chair*

**“Living in the Watershed and being a part of the working landscape means always thinking about tomorrow.”**



# Help Us Save Farms and Protect Water Quality

**Farmland, clean water and a way of life. All three are dependent on a thriving agricultural community that is threatened by rising land prices and development. Safeguard these irreplaceable resources—our rural landscape and its family farms—by protecting regional farmlands and working landscapes through this Fund.**

- Advocate: \$35
- Friend of the Watershed: \$250
- Steward: \$2,500
- Supporter: \$50
- Sponsor: \$500
- Conserver: \$5,000
- Investor: \$100
- Benefactor: \$1,000
- Guardian: \$10,000

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