

Watershed Farm & Forest

SUMMER 2010

Stewardship Programs of the Watershed Agricultural Council

The Year of the Watershed Tour

The Year “2010” is quickly being recognized as “The Year of the Watershed Tour.” As of August 2010, the Watershed Agricultural Council has hosted 10 watershed tours for college students and international contingents, as well as county, regional and federal agencies. Many of these groups are interested in bringing our best management practices back to their home countries. Others want to learn how we have successfully financed these PES, Payment for EcoServices, (the latest buzz word in land and water conservation). Still others were curious how we, with the help of our collaborators, are using public dollars to improve water quality for nine million New Yorkers and improve the economic dynamics of the family farm.

Among the groups involved with the watershed tour experience were Mexican state officials, regional water managers and nonprofit representatives (arranged by World Bank); the Cambodian Minister of Water Resources and water policy makers from Laos (sponsored by U.S. Forest Service, Winrock International, and Asia Development Bank); high-level agriculture, forestry and watershed managers from China, Vietnam and Thailand (arranged with NYS DEC and sponsored by Asia Development Bank); first-year graduate students from Bard College; environmentalists from Sao Paulo, Brazil; and over 75 forest professionals

from India (hosted by Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Public Policy).

Recovery Act Funds Featured in 3-Farm Tour

In June, the Council hosted a tour of three farms within the New York City watershed. All three farms received American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funding through a collaborative effort between USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Council. Forty-five people gathered for the 100-mile bus tour through Delaware and Schoharie Counties to see conservation practices and projects that help reduce waterborne pathogens, nutrients, and sediments. With the \$1-million ARRA funding, NRCS entered into an agreement with the Council to provide technical and financial assistance for 327 landowners implementing 171 conservation practices. Putting conservation on the ground within the NYC watershed ensures a quality source of drinking water that delivers more than 1-billion gallons of clean water to New York City residents



Originally one of the Agricultural Program’s 10 pilot farms,  farm was sold by Jim and Barbara Robertson last year to a young farmer, Kyle Rockefeller. Rocky Crest Holsteins remains an active dairy, as Kyle explained to the group, with many of its original BMPs now ready for upgrade or replacement.

each day. These projects translated into approximately 440 local jobs.

The group visited the farms of Kyle Rockefeller of Rocky Crest Farms (Bloomville), Karl Goeckel and Gerald Hull of Brookside Farm Farm (Prattsville), and the Manhattan Country School (Roxbury). On-farm conservation practices included whole farm plans, waste storage facilities, stream buffers and fencing, animal crossings, and a small farm compost structure. “These farms showcased the collaborative work of the various agencies in 2009,” noted Executive Director, Craig Cashman. “Having the farmers on hand to talk about the benefits of the programs and the work installed on their properties brought this work to life.”

Mexican Watershed Officials Tour Thunder View Farm, Frost Valley Model Forest

Adapted from an article by Terry Hannum, Delaware County Times

As part of The World Bank of Washington, D.C.’s international interest, twelve forestry and farm-related individuals from Mexico visited the NYC watershed in their five-day tour of New York. The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) facilitated the group’s full-day trip into the Catskills to learn about farmland conservation and forestry best management practices. An internet search led the group’s coordinator A.J. Glauber, Senior Environmental Specialist of Environment and Water Resources of Sustainable Development, Latin America and the Caribbean for The World Bank to WAC’s success stories.

Traveling from their base in New York City, the group first visited Thunder View Farm in Grahamsville, owned by Richard Coombe. Coombe shared with the group a detailed overview of his farm operations and the importance of water quality and land conservation practices. The group also toured the Frost Valley Model Forest, where Forestry Program Manager Tom Pavlesich spoke about blending best management practices, ecosystem research and education programs. Frost Valley model forest is one of three “outdoor classrooms” that the Forestry Program uses to educate the watershed public. “The goal is to understand and interpret the link between water quality and the working forest landscape,” Pavlesich explained. The group, a diverse mix of Mexican government and conservation agency representatives, had plenty of questions including:



“Thank you again for hosting our group! It was so nice to meet you in person and the presentations and visits that you arranged were excellent. At our wrap-up dinner, the Cambodians and Laotians kept saying how interesting and relevant it was to meet with you all. The group’s time in Albany and the Watershed really hit the nail on the head.”

Darcy Nelson, China and Mekong Specialist, US Forest Service – International Programs, Washington, D.C.

- how are projects financed?
- how are landowners encouraged to comply?
- what restrictions are enforced to maintain the management practices?
- why would people keep a forest if it is not profitable?

For farmers and forest owners in United States, many of these questions seem unusual. But they served as a reminder that personal rights, including property ownership, are much different in other parts of the world. According to Pavlesich, the Catskill watershed is a model of private action for a public benefit. “Roughly 80 percent of the 2,000-square-mile watershed is forested,” noted Pavlesich, “and of that 80 percent, about 75 percent of that forest land is private property.” Pavlesich explained how landowners receive incentive payments for some programs, whereas others are free; all are voluntary. “The landowners want to participate and are not required to do so. Many programs are funded through grant money for land stewardship and management practices,” he added. These programs are typically forester-assisted and address woodland issues, such as erosion and wildlife management, through a Forest Management Plan. Many regions of Mexico have similar terrain to the Catskill Mountain forests. Sergio Graf, General Coordinator of Product for the Forest Service of Mexico and overseer to the country’s National Program of Environmental Services, stated, “The government of Mexico spends about \$100-million dollars per year on the six million acres of forest land under conservation.”

World Bank has financial interests with Mexico and supports many of its land conservation and PES programs. Ashley Camhi, an economist in environmental management for World Bank’s Latin America sector, orchestrated the five-day tour for the group of 17.

The group ended their day with a local foods luncheon at Pure Catskills member restaurant, The Peekamoose in Shandaken. Over lunch, Board Chairman Fred Huneke talked

about the Council's origins and its creation out of adversity. He stressed that the best approach to successful partnerships depend on cooperation. He attributed WAC's success to the voluntary program that is locally controlled and 100% funded by the City of New York. "Originally, the thought was that management through strict regulations and enforcement was the way to make these programs work. But we proved that encouraging landowners to voluntarily participate is clearly what works for everyone's benefit, as this is what brings more people on board," Huneke explained.

Before their long trip back to New York City, Communications Director Tara Collins debriefed the tour group at the Ashokan Reservoir's "Frying Pan" viewshed. "Land conservation is the key to water quality, as opposed to scrambling to recover water quality after the fact," noted Collins. "Bringing the group full circle, and ending at the Ashokan, helped connect the various pieces of our watershed mosaic."

Programs such as this create a keen awareness that water quality is not only a farm, community, state or nations concern, but the entire world's interest. The impact of these visits may take years to manifest in foreign countries. In the interim, several groups expressed interest in continuing the dialogue through video conferencing. One group suggested sending a watershed farm and forest contingent to Brazil (at a corporate sponsor's expense) to help landowners south of the equator embrace the conservation practices in place here. The Sao Paulo, Brazilian group featured in the *Watershed Farm & Forest* Winter 2009 issue was featured in National Geographic's online news. The Council was also featured in the Brazilian environmentalist magazine, *Canal Meio Ambiente* as a result of a July visit by two of its editors. "Surprisingly, you never know how these tours will turn out."



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WAC Engineering Specialist Tim Hebbard (second from left) explained how manure systems currently under construction at Thunder View Farm will benefit drinking water in the long run. Along with containing animal waste, Hebbard noted drainage and fencing as key, low-cost measures that serve as deterrents to waterway destruction.



Collaboration is Key in Croton

The East of Hudson Program teamed up with local nonprofits to engage area residents on the topic of water quality. In July, Agricultural Program Coordinator Carrie Davis moderated an environmental film screening with Friends of Hilltop Hanover. The free event included showings of several documentaries and short films such as *Just a Lawn*, *The Power of Community* and *The Truth Behind the Tap*. “Free popcorn and admission, plus the after-film discussion attracted a lively, engaged crowd,” noted Davis. “The venue, at Hilltop Hanover Educational Center, helped us raise awareness of this Westchester County gem and the site of our Yorktown Heights office. The films served as springboards to discussion, to explore the importance of people actively engaging in environmental practices and to realize that change is possible in small measures.” A Fall environmental film screening planned for September 11 at 6 p.m. will feature *FRESH the Movie* and *The Unfractured Future*.

Several other collaborative ventures are also in the works. In May, conservation Planner Susanne Sahler took the watershed environmental message to Snow Hill Farm again this year and entertained questions and solutions from elementary school students touring the facility. The Council also sponsored Dutchess County Watershed Awareness Month for the time. At various venues, Forester Brendan Murphy helped raise awareness of WAC’s programs and water quality protection efforts in the Croton Watershed. Clearpool Educational Center has expressed interest in hosting a Putnam County-based model forest with the Forestry Program; Clearpool is an affiliate of Green Chimneys, an active environmental education partner. With the help of Lower Hudson RC&D, Davis is arranging a small farmer discussion panel for late September at Hilltop Hanover Farms. The morning talk will focus on farming east of the Hudson River, improving the local food system, and protecting water and land resources.



Earth Day, family visitors walk the fence line to admire Hilltop Hanover Farm crops. Conservation easements, like those in place at Tilly Foster Farm and private farms throughout the Catskill/Delaware watershed, provide the backdrop for father-daughter walk-and-talks like this far into the future.

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Gaining Access to DEP Agricultural Lands

Senior Property Manager Charles Laing at New York City Environmental Protection (DEP) recently answered questions on how watershed farmers can add DEP's agricultural lands to their Whole Farm Plan by entering short- and long-term lease arrangements that put these properties back into a working landscape.

What should I do if I am interested in using City property for agricultural use?

Contact Charles at (845) 340-7218. The more information you can supply, the quicker the request can be reviewed. Provide relevant information: town, parcel Section/Block/Lot numbers, previous owner, and road location.

What does DEP consider before allowing agricultural use on City property?

DEP will verify that agricultural use is consistent with other uses that may be occurring on the property, such as hunting, Land Use Permits, deed or other restrictions.

What are some of the standard requirements of the Agricultural Use Policy?

Farmers can tell DEP how they would manage the land to best achieve both their goals and protect water quality. DEP will consider such uses as row crops and livestock, in addition to hay. Fertilizers and manure may be applied if the results of a soil test confirm the need for nutrients. There must be at least 25 feet of undisturbed riparian buffers along all streams and wetlands. Limited pesticides and herbicides use, outside of riparian buffer areas, will be considered with an integrated pest management approach.

Are there any other special requirements? Yes, ners must:

- Maintain the required Workers Compensation and Disability Benefits Coverage (or provide proof they are not required to carry coverage).
- Furnish and maintain a commercial general liability insurance policy.
- Demonstrate experience in farming and agricultural activities.

How long is the term of the project? Projects will last five years and in certain cases, these may be extended for another five.

What is the next step? If the property is determined to be compatible for agricultural use, a Notice of Project Availability will be posted in a local newspaper. This announcement will also be provided to a list of interested parties and to the Watershed Agricultural Council. If you are interested in getting on this list, send your name and address to Charles Laing at NYC DEP, 71 Smith Ave., Kingston, NY 12401.

How much does it cost to use New York City land for agricultural purposes?

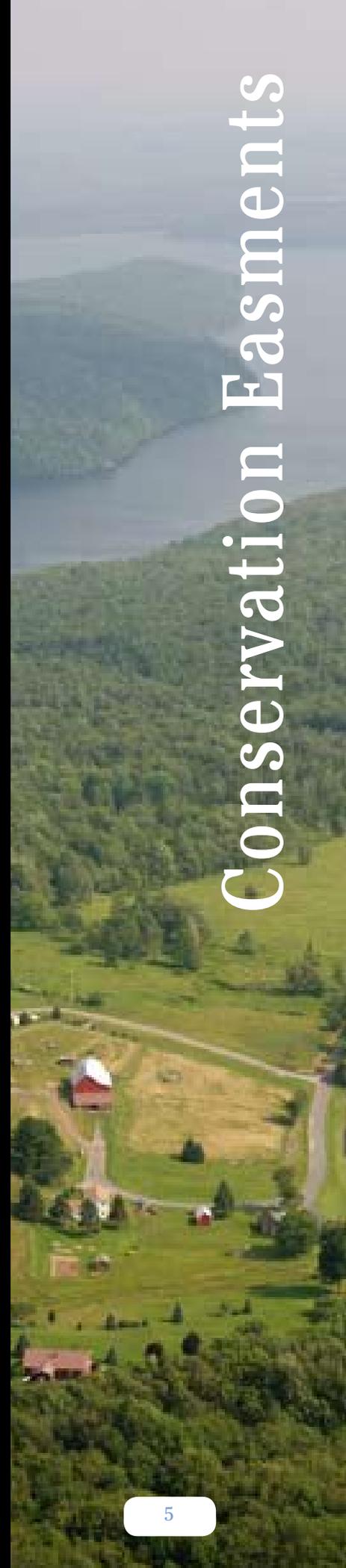
In 2009, annual rental payments ranged from \$5 to \$1,000/year depending on project size, land quality, and the agricultural uses proposed. Since it is an open competitive process, farmers are encouraged to submit their highest and best offer as part of the payment proposal, a land use plan, and map.

How will DEP choose a proposal? DEP will consider the protection of water quality as a primary factor and will give consideration to the following:

- Thoroughness and quality of overall land use plan including water quality 60%
- Protection of Riparian Areas (such as width, amount of disturbance, best management practices to protect riparian areas) 20%
- Payment amount 20%

I have a Whole Farm Plan (WFP) on my property and other properties I rent.

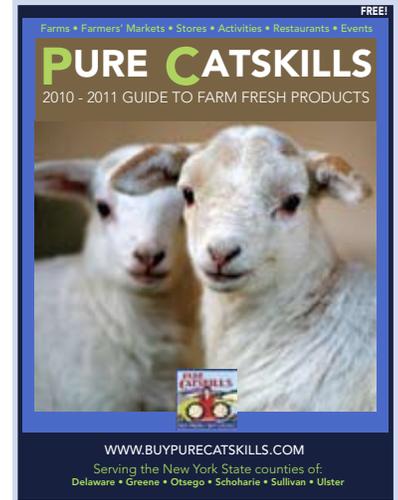
Can I use it on this project? Generally, yes, as long as the plan explains and addresses the proposed activities and water-quality protection.





Buy Local Guides Available

Thousands of copies of the 2010-2011 Pure Catskills *Guide to Farm Fresh Products* can be found in locations throughout the Catskills. With an updated design and fresh new look, this year's Guide added over 30 new members to the 200+ businesses already participating in the Buy Local campaign. Farm and business listings found in the print *Guide* can also be accessed easily through the newly redesigned website, www.purecatskills.com. Come visit the site with an expanded map search, business listings, events calendar, and blog. Become a "fan" of Pure Catskills through Facebook and sign-up to receive monthly eNewsletters. Let us know what you think; we'd love to hear your feedback!



Putting Fallow Catskills Lands to Work

A new resource is in development with support from the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) and a coalition of nonprofit and agency partners. Catskill LandLink will help connect new and existing farmers with available land resources in the region. Using online and print promotions, the initiative will serve as a complementary resource to the state and regional programs already working to connect farmers with land. It will also help to sustain the working landscape that has made the Catskills an agricultural region for centuries.

This effort builds upon the land conservation efforts already administered by WAC and its partners. It will add to the new farmer training available through Cornell Cooperative Extension offices in nearly every county, land leasing opportunities available through New York City Environmental Protection and the efforts of dozens of land trusts. Our aim is to maintain a consistent resource with comprehensive information on farming in the Catskills – much in the same way Pure Catskills is a resource that provides information and resources on local food products.

In addition to land listings, the online resources for Catskill LandLink will include background information to farming in the region. Sample leases, county contacts for farming information, and links to land conservation entities and agricultural infrastructure sites are just a few of the Catskill LandLink amenities to be found online. We expect the site to launch in late Summer 2010.

In the coming months, we will be building our database of land available for lease or sale. The land information will be useful to beginning farmers interested in locating a business here and to existing farmers looking for additional land for grazing or cutting hay. Land details will include total number of acres, housing available and structures onsite such as barns, fencing and watering systems.

Farmers in search of additional land or with inactive property available for lease can contact Challey Comer at ccomer@nycwatershed.org or (607) 865-7090. We welcome input on this new initiative and hope this resource will be a positive way to connect local farmers with affordable opportunities.

Catskill Community Gardens Take Root

A new aspect of the local food movement has come to our region. Dozens of community vegetable gardens have popped up in recent years with support of neighbors of every stripe. From the largest towns to hamlets in rural valleys, these

projects are proving to be an important means of gathering neighbors around food. As Halcott Center Community Gardener Sheila Reynertson puts it, “Community gardens are a great way to catch up with neighbors and learn from each other. We tend to so much more than our vegetables when we get the chance to garden together.”

Long a presence in urban landscapes, community gardens serve rural communities by creating places for children to learn about nutrition and for adults to share skills. Many of the Catskills gardens have been headed by individuals with farming backgrounds. Lisa Wujnovich of Mountain Dell Farm helped start the Hancock Community Garden last year. Rebecca Morgan grew up on a dairy farm in Walton and started a garden there last year in her father’s hayfield. In Halcott Center, the DiBenedetto and Johnson families have been donating lumber, compost and time on the tractors from their dairies to the community gardens just down the road.

Keeping our rural residents healthy is another focus of many garden projects. In Ellenville, local not-for-profit Family of Ellenville has been enhancing the Aiyana Garden for three years. The garden project adds to their many human service efforts including transitional living and employment programs as well as adolescent services. The garden has also donated produce to local food pantries. In Oneonta, the Parent-Teacher Organization at the Greater Plains Elementary School has been working with a group of parents to develop a garden on the school grounds. High school students from the Walton Central School are growing vegetables for sale at the local Big M Supermarket. Some projects have also received nutrition-focused funding from Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Eat Well-Play Hard campaign.

The quantity of these projects has become significant in just a few years. In Greene County, four gardens have been supported through the local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office. Sullivan Renaissance has supported the development



A unique approach to weed control at the Halcott Center Community Garden. Photo courtesy of Sheila Reynertson



Transplanting with help from Barthel’s Farm Market staff at the Aiyana Community Garden in Ellenville.

Photo courtesy of Jen Pineda

of gardens in Hurleyville, Loch Sheldrake, Livingston Manor, Liberty, Monticello and Woodbourne. The Sullivan County projects are engaging students and faculty from Sullivan County Community College, staff and residents at the Federation for the Homeless, and village community development corporations. Such collaborations demonstrate a garden’s potential to make connections between our local food system and new members of our communities.

Help us create a complete list of the garden projects by sharing details about your garden. We will post a more complete list online at www.purecatskills.com to celebrate the region’s successes; contact Farm to Market Manager Challey Comer at (607) 865-7090.



Corn and cabbages thrive at the Walton Community Garden. Photo courtesy of Rebecca Morgan

SAVE THE DATE!

Clean Sweep 2010 September 24 & 25 • Delhi

Free and open to the public

The 14th annual household hazardous materials redemption day is open to all watershed farmers and Delaware County residents. Along with turning in old paints and electronics, landowners can drop off pharmaceuticals, medicines, syringes and sharps. Pre-register by calling (607) 865-6474 or email CleanSweepDelaware@gmail.com. Download a redemption materials brochure to get started today at www.nycwatershed.org. Sponsorship for this event is provided by the Watershed Agricultural Council, Delaware County Department of Public Works, CCE-DC, and NYC DEP.

Hilltop Hanover Environmental Film Series September 11 • Yorktown Heights

Doors open at 6 p.m.; screening starts at 7 p.m.

Free and open to the public

Featured films include *FRESH the Movie* and *The Unfractured Future*; an informal discussion about sustainability will follow. For more information, contact Hilltop Hanover Educational Center & Farm at (914) 962-2368.

You Are What You Eat with Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms

November 6 • CVI Building, Liberty

Cost: \$25 includes local foods lunch

Come to this full-day, two-part workshop with outspoken clean food farmer, Joel Salatin. Joel will speak about how local food can help save our economy, environment and our health. Mixing dirt-under-the-fingernails personal experience with mischievous humor, he passionately defends small farms, local food systems and the right to opt out of the conventional food paradigm. Salatin will speak about how our culinary skills and local food connections have been replaced with “no trespassing” signs, bureaucratic paperwork, unpronounceable labels, bar codes and beeping cash registers. Using first-hand stories from Polyface Farm, he will also explain the marketing and production methods for his farm. For more information, contact Melinda Ketcham of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy at nyland@delawarehighlands.org or (845) 807-0535. Sponsorship for this event is provided by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Sullivan Renaissance, Watershed Agricultural Council, Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development, Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, and CCE-Sullivan.

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