



Ensuring a Special Place Stays Special

On my daily commute to the DLC office, I pass through an area of Dutchess County that never once fails to take my breath away. Traveling on roads throughout the Harlem and Hudson Valleys, I am struck by expanses of forests that unfold into wide open fields filled with grazing cows or bursting with row after row of fresh sweet corn. Barns and silos dot the landscape, towering over tranquil hayfields that ripple with the gentle breeze. I often stop to help a turtle across the road, or see turkeys, or bobcats, and the occasional bear on my travels.

Every time I drive by a farm, I am reminded of the resilience of our farmers and their families who, in the face of economic challenges and pressure to sell their farms to developers, stand firm. Their farms remain open and they continue to work and steward the land that is in essence, part of their being; a big part of their day to day lives. We benefit from the local, healthy food they provide, and the significant scenic views that they steward by keeping the land open. And I am reminded about how many animals thrive in our forests and wetlands.

I am also reminded how lucky we are to live in an area where folks understand land conservation and believe in it. All you have to do is look around you to really get that. From families who love their land so much that they choose to protect it forever. To walkers, hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists who enjoy trails, preserves, and quiet country roads. To teachers who use the land to awaken our kids' curiosity about our amazing natural world. To our local and county governments who realize that keeping land open benefits us all. From small children to adults, the people of Dutchess County know that open land defines our sense of place.

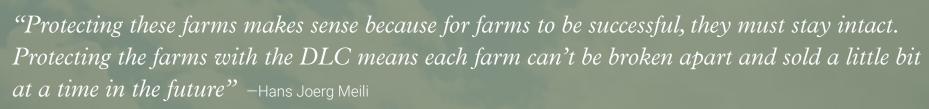
I am proud to say that our work together is reaping rewards. I'm eager for you to read about the Meili Family who protected three working family farms. Their dedication to conservation has ensured that their land is forever protected and available for agriculture into the future. They, along with other families you'll read about, are great examples of how Dutchess County citizens embrace their rural heritage and understand that our land needs to be protected in order to ensure that our food supply, our natural environment, and our way of life is secured for the future.

With each passing year, I am more and more heartened by the generosity of our supporters and our local community. Your belief in protecting this special corner of the world is why it stays special – and sustainable. So please remember, the next time a local farm, or a critical forest parcel, or a wetland that is key to our water supply, or beloved family property is protected, it's all because you make conservation happen! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Recky







A Family's Passion and a Star-Aligned Partnership

Sometimes, certain conservation work can only happen when the stars align. And in protecting a special 330 acres of farmland in the northeastern pocket of the Town of Amenia, the stars are the Meili family as landowners and a critical assemblage of DLC's conservation partners.

In 1969, Hans Joerg Meili purchased property on the border of New York and Connecticut that served as the homestead for raising his four children, Barbara, younger Joerg, and twins Carla and Craig. Over the past 50 years, with careful and strategic purchases, the Meilis have amassed about 800 acres and three family farms flanking the New York/Connecticut border, in a mostly-contiguous line starting east of the Village of Amenia, where the Harlem Valley Rail Trail crosses Route 343, and extending into Sharon, CT.

Younger Joerg managed the 235-acre "Destined Wind and Arrowhead Hills Farms" as a dairy for over 30 years and recently transitioned to a more diverse operation of specialty grains, other high value crops, and hay for area horse farms. He first reached out to the DLC in 2016 about protecting these lands owned in part by his dad, and in other part by all four siblings.

Over the past decade, Craig has developed "Meili Farm" into a 250-acre free range hog and beef cattle operation that straddles the NY/CT border. The 95-acre portion in New York supports hog pasture and crop fields and is bisected by the Webutuck Creek. For the most part, meat is sold to shops in Westchester and Brooklyn that prepare their own sausages and charcuterie; but an increasing amount is sold at area restaurants through the local Farms2Tables company and the on-site farm store.

The three farms create a distinct landscape for anyone traveling the Rail Trail or driving along Route 343 (Amenia Road in CT) crossing between NY and CT. The mosaic of working farmlands, forests, wetlands and streams set against the backdrop of Rattlesnake Mountain, perfectly characterizes the distinctive Harlem Valley we all know and love.

The DLC quickly identified Dutchess County and the NYS Dept of Agriculture and Markets as partners to help conserve the Destined Wind and Arrowhead Hills farms. Working together with the family, these two farms were protected in December 2019. Since Meili Farm is positioned on the CT/NY State line, the CT Department of Agriculture joined the DLC, Dutchess County, the 1772 Foundation, and the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) in conversations with the family about conserving all 250 acres of Meili Farm. The New York portion of Meili Farm was protected in October 2019.

The family members are very close, and Hans Joerg still lives on the original homestead property. Growing up in a suburb of Zurich during World War II, Hans Joerg was very aware of the value of local food production, and most importantly, having abundant farmland to support agriculture.

It is no surprise that this land ethic would be passed onto his children and grandchildren. His son younger Joerg echoed the sentiments of all his siblings in saying, "The farm has been a great place to raise our children. By keeping it a farm, this may be an opportunity for any of our children to follow their passions for farming." Craig also sees the importance of keeping the lands in the family, "Due to our close proximity to the largest marketplace in the country, my farming operation can be sustainable and profitable given I can operate on land that we own and can make the day to day decisions."

Our Farmer/ Landowner Match Program

Are you a farmer seeking land to grow crops? Do you own land that you'd like to lease to a farmer? We can help!

High real estate costs make it difficult for farmers to purchase farmland and farm leasing is one strategy to help increase access to farmland. Leasing enables farmers to start and expand their operations with significantly less capital and risk. This is why, in 2013, the DLC began working in collaboration with the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) to expand its Farmer Landowner Match Program into Dutchess County.

The program, which previously focused solely on Columbia County, facilitates lease agreements between landowners seeking to have their land farmed, and farmers seeking land. Since the program began in 2011, 60 landowners in Dutchess County have participated.

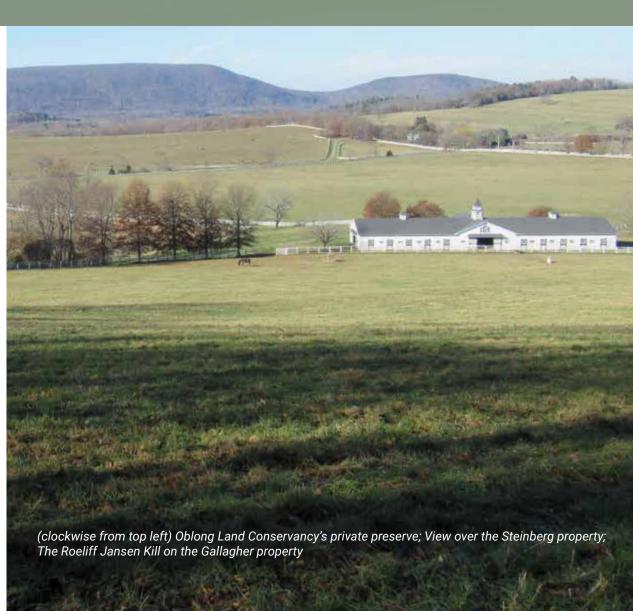
For more information visit our website at dutchessland.org or call our office at 845.677.3002.

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"Katherine and I are delighted that our farmland will continue sharing its beauty and productivity with people for generations." – Frank Martucci







Grateful for those who Protect their Land

2019 was a great year for conservation: more than 475 acres of land will remain open forever thanks to local landowners who care about the future of their land and were willing to donate conservation easements to the DLC ensuring the lands' protection into the future.

Conservation minded Abigail and Julian Steinberg protected their recently purchased 212-acre property in Stanford and Pine Plains. This is their second donated easement – they conserved their 77-acre property in Stanford with the DLC in 2014.

Frank and Katherine Martucci are no strangers to land conservation: this is their fifth protected property! In 2019 they conserved 171.5 acres in Ancram creating 544 acres of land that the couple has protected to date. Special thanks to Scenic Hudson for partnering with us on the Martuccis' most recent conservation effort.

Peter J. Gallagher began his conservation work with the DLC in 2014 when he donated an easement on 48 acres of his property in Ancram. In 2019, he added another 35 acres to the land already protected bringing his total conserved land to more than 83 acres.

Oblong Land Conservancy (OLC) protected a 9.26-acre private preserve in the Great Swamp Watershed in Pawling that is a haven for wildlife and ensures a portion of this critical wetland and a portion of the Swamp River will be conserved forever. The DLC often works together with our land trust partners to jointly protect and steward land.







Every Forest Tells a Story

Every forest tells a story. Its contours speak of ancient glaciers. Tree species opine on soil qualities, while absent tree species tell of historical outbreaks of pests and pathogens like chestnut blight and dogwood anthracnose. Stone walls remember an agricultural past, while broken or tipped-up trees recall the fury of wind and ice. And throughout the forest, the sounds and signs of wildlife provide a "cast list" of plants and animals: the characters currently appearing in this remarkable tale of the lives of trees.

Far from being disinterested observers, everyone who owns, manages, or appreciates the forest is part of that story. Future generations will read in their forest landscapes the story that is written by the land stewards of today. To cultivate those land stewards, the DLC presented a springtime workshop entitled "An Ecological Approach to Forest Stewardship" in collaboration with the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

The question of how to be a good forest steward is a difficult one; each forest is unique and each steward has individual goals and ideas. How to decide what to do, and what methods to use? The key is to begin with listening, learning and observing. Trees can live much longer than humans, and so to plan for their future requires that a steward take time to learn about the forest before making management decisions. A good steward listens to the story the forest is telling before setting out to write the next chapter.

"Conservation is a positive exercise of skill and insight, not merely a negative exercise of abstinence and caution." – Aldo Leopold

A forest, after all, is more than just trees! It is the wildlife that scampers above, nests in the hollows, swoops among branches, and prowls amid the trunks, in search of a place to live and in pursuit of their next meal (while trying to avoid becoming someone else's next meal). It is the shading and cooling of the land, the cleaning of our air and water, and the soaking up of heavy rains that would otherwise cause damaging floods. It is the seeds of a future forest tucked amongst the leaf litter, awaiting the right moment to sprout.

When you take time to consider all that forests do for us and the myriad species that will be affected by your management practices, it is clear that a good steward must carefully consider their management goals and strategies before taking any action. "Letting nature take its course" often results in a forest that is tangled with invasive species and unable to provide good habitat for wildlife.

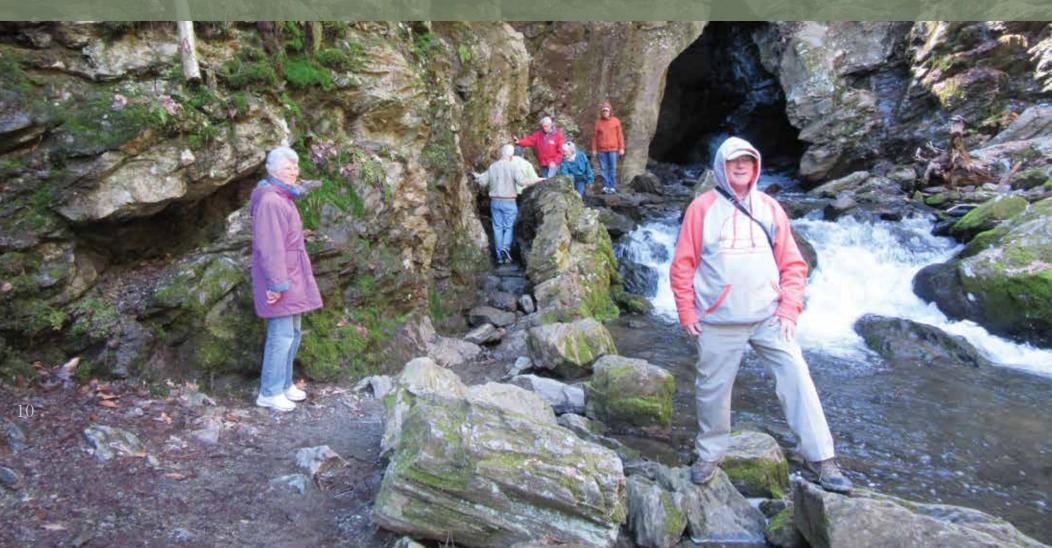
Our forests are an indispensable and durable resource that provides many benefits to us. Past events have shaped them into the familiar landscapes of today, but it is our choices and actions that will shape the forests of the future. Which tree species will be there to greet your grandchildren as they explore the shady depths of the woods? Will they know the sight of a bobcat or fisher? Will they be able to thrill to the sight of a scarlet tanager or the flutelike song of the wood thrush? What story will your forest tell them?

Recommendations for Landowners

- 1. Take your time! Create a long-term plan, set goals and benchmarks to measure your progress, and work with a consulting forester if needed.
- 2. Use apps like iNaturalist or Seek to identify and inventory plants and animals, and learn to identify signs of forest pests and pathogens.
 (Refer to the New York State DEC https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4969. html for information.)
- 3. When dealing with invasive species, pick your battles and be alert for newly emerging invasives. (Refer to www.LHPRISM.org for resources.)
- 4. Remember that doing nothing is also a management decision, and "letting nature take its course" may have negative consequences.
- Don't try to do everything at once.Nature moves in seasonal cycles and so should you.

"Collaborating with the DLC has been an innovative new partnership to support our commitment to building healthy communities through our Living Well programs at MVP Health Care. Our partnership and programs have enabled our members at MVP to engage in unique educational programs while reaping the many health benefits of being out in nature."

-Sydney Leone, Senior Health Programs & Partnerships Manager, Health Promotion



Getting Outdoors Can Make You Feel Better

Did you know that spending just fifteen minutes outside on a sunny day can help our bodies receive the recommended dose of Vitamin D? And that getting sufficient Vitamin D can help reduce inflammation, pain in muscles and bones, risk of Type 1 diabetes and several types of cancer? In fact, time in nature can help people recover more quickly from an injury or illness, boost your immunity and heighten energy, creativity and overall mental and physical health.¹ Teaming up with MVP Health Care, this year the DLC got MVP members outside to hike at the Dover Stone Church and Vassar College Preserves.

Collaborating with community partners like the DLC, MVP's Living Well Programs incorporate wellness—physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, social, and environmental health—into its education and outdoors programs for a holistic approach to well being.

There was plenty of sunshine to soak up at the Dover Stone Church Preserve as the DLC's staff ecologist Julie Hart guided a group of health-conscious people on a walk there in April. Hiking along the main trail surrounded by nature and fresh air, the group learned about the interesting history of the Stone Church cavern's amazing natural formation and about its cultural and ecological ties to the broader Dover landscape.

In October, MVP members met at the Vassar College Preserve for an easy hike led by Julie and Vassar's Preserve Manager Keri VanCamp. Walking the trail and enjoying being outside on this crisp, cloudy day, made way for a great history lesson of the Preserve's landscape, the identity of various trees, natural succession and invasive species.

Opportunities for Outside Adventures:

WALKS AND HIKES. You don't have to wait for an event to take a walk outside. Dutchess County has 400 miles of trails that are just waiting to be explored. The trails vary in difficulty, so choose one that matches your ability. For those who are not as mobile, check out places that are relatively flat with boardwalks or paving (like the Dutchess Rail Trail). Hike the Hudson Valley has a great list of trails along with a difficulty scale so you can match your hiking ability to a trail. https://hikethehudsonvalley.com/the-hikes/

GARDENING. Immerse yourself in flowers (or vegetables!) as an easy way to get outside in the fresh air and sunshine. The amount of labor is up to you – a few pots on your front step or a modest flower/vegetable garden require less effort for those with mobility restrictions. Local garden clubs and Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County are great places to look for ideas for your very own garden. http://ccedutchess.org/gardening

VISIT LOCAL PARKS. Try lifting your spirits with a visit to a local park or natural area for passive recreation. Dutchess County boasts a great number of national, state and local recreational areas and parks where you can soak up nature. Fishing, strolling, birdwatching, painting and drawing, and many other activities will give you a mental and physical boost. Or just bring a book to read and relax on a bench or bring your own chair. For a list of local parks and trails in your area visit: https://gis.dutchessny.gov/parks-and-trails/.

GET REACQUAINTED WITH YOUR OWN BACKYARD. Bring your exercise equipment outside and work out to the sounds of nature while you breathe in fresh air and soak up Vitamin D. You can also enlist the kids in finding games that you can play together outside or helping with light yardwork. Silver Sneakers has some great ideas here: https://www.silversneakers.com/blog/category/fitness/.

 $^{^1\} https://eldercarealliance.org/blog/seniors-benefit-spending-time-outdoors/\#:\sim:text=Spending\%20time\%20outdoors\%20may\%20boost,may\%20improve\%20creativity\%20as\%20well.$



No Farms, No Food - Local Food Security - a Key to Our Health

The American Farmland Trust's recently released report, Farms Under Threat: The State of the States, notes that "Between 2001 and 2016, 11 million acres of farmland and ranchland were converted to urban and highly developed land use (4.1 million acres) or low-density residential land use (nearly 7 million acres). That's equal to all the U.S. farmland devoted to fruit, nut, and vegetable production in 2017—or 2,000 acres a day paved over, built up, and converted to uses that threaten the future of agriculture." Never has the importance of our local farms been more central to our everyday lives. When you think of it, AFT's classic bumper sticker says it all: "No Farms, No Food." Here in Dutchess County, many of our local farmers have teamed up with us to protect their farms and our access to local, fresh and healthy foods.

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This year, three amazing families protected five working farms that contribute to our local food supply and economy. The Meili Family of Meili Farm, Destined Wind Farm, and Arrowhead Hills Farm in Amenia, the MacLeans of Thompson-Finch Farm in Ancram (in partnership with the Columbia Land Conservancy and Scenic Hudson), and the O'Leary Family of Glenmore Farm in Pleasant Valley nd Clinton. Together they have ensured that just under 950 acres of land will remain available for agriculture into the future.

(I to r) Arrowhead Hills Farm; Glenmore Farm; Thompson-Finch Farm. Above: The entrance to Meili Farm







Since 2001, the DLC has raised more than \$35.6 million to protect 37 working farms and 5,585 acres. This funding comes from federal, state, county, town, and private sources and from supporters like you!







Ensuring Birds have Homes

Footsteps muffled by a carpet of moss and leaves, you gaze up at the verdant, gracefully arching canopy. Insects zoom past with buzzes and high-pitched whines. From all around you comes a gentle cacophony of tweets, whistles, warbles, chirps and chatters. You are in a forest - and you are surrounded by the birds who call it home. From flycatchers to finches, and warblers to woodcocks, forest birds are essential components of a forest's ecosystem.

You may not realize it, but forests play a very important role in your life. They store carbon, offer protection for watersheds, prevent soil erosion, mitigate climate change, and provide you with the oxygen you need to live. This means that keeping our forests healthy helps us continue as a species – and this is where birds come in. Birds contribute to the health of our forest in many ways. First, by eating fruit and disseminating the seeds, they replenish plants in the forest or bring back ones that have died off. They are also masters of insect control. According to a recent study, birds eat 400 to 500 million tons of insects each year. When insect populations are destroying the forest canopy by feasting on its leaves, having birds around to reduce their numbers is vital to forest health. Additionally, birds help control small rodent populations and serve as food to larger predators.¹

So it's not good news that about one-third of 90 forest bird species have had significant population declines in the last fifty years. Wanting to learn more, the DLC teamed up with NY Audubon to provide a program to help forest owners attract birds that will perform the functions essential to a healthy forest.

On a beautiful Saturday in May, forest owners gathered at the DLC office for a presentation by Jillian Liner and Dave Decker of Audubon NY, as well as DLC (and Audubon NY) Board member and avid birder Woody Keesee. The group discussed how fragmentation of forests, interfering vegetation, and the overpopulation of deer can contribute to the loss of forest birds. Folks were happy to learn that there are ways you can manage your woods to encourage their return, like introducing softwoods, allowing dead standing or cavity trees to remain standing for nesting; removing invasive trees or plants that crowd out native species; and asking for help from a forester and wildlife experts. The group then moved outside to a nearby wood to see how they could put the tools they learned into practice.

Want to learn more?

A copy of Audubon NY's full color presentation with management tips is available on our website: https://dutchessland.org/from-a-birds-eye-view-is-your-forest-the-one-theyll-call-home/

Touching lives through conservation education:

- Exploring nature: In 2019, almost 1000 people benefited from twentythree educational programs held by the DLC in nine towns throughout Dutchess County. Almost all of them included an outdoor component to encourage hands-on study of the natural world.
- Fostering the next generation: We're passionate about partnering with schools to introduce students of all ages to environmental concepts.
 Whether it's in the classroom, out in nature, or at a career fair, we're happy to raise awareness of land conservation.
- Increasing knowledge: Did you know that conservation education comes to your mailbox once a quarter? Keep an eye out for our "Nature of Things" and "Explorer's Notebook" features in each issue of our Gaining Ground newsletter. We promise you'll learn something new!

²https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/why-we-need-birds-far-more-they-need-us

"We placed an easement on our land to help save the long-term character of the property, the immediate area, and this part of Dutchess County. Placing easements helps ensure that what we value, what attracted many people to the area both recently and in decades past, what long-term residents have appreciated, will remain for generations to come." — Farnham Collins, DLC Advisory Council Member and Easement Donor



Thank you to the DLC's Advisory Council:

Our Advisory Council is our go-to for advice in varying capacities ranging from farming to finance. Thanks for your willingness to share your thoughts, guidance, and support!

Kathleen V. Augustine Gayle Bontecou Theodora S. Budnik Russell L. Carson David C. Clapp Farnham F. Collins Everett R. Cook, II Wendy C. Curtis Willem de Vogel Constance I. DuHamel Frank Martucci Marta Nottebohm Simon C. Roosevelt
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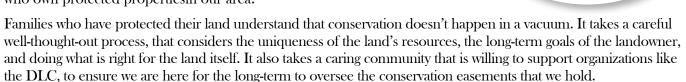
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A Place, A Plan, and A Partnership

When land is protected, it helps to clean our air, store carbon, filter our water, grow forests, crops and food; it provides a place for floodwaters to naturally recede, homes for a great many critters (including people), amazing views that often help define our communities, and places to recreate and enjoy which help keep us healthy and define our quality of life.

Thus, each year, we celebrate the people who have worked with the DLC to permanently protect their land that truly benefits all of us, often in unseen and unspoken ways.

Protecting your land is just the start of your relationship with the DLC. When you put your land into conservation, you enter into a partnership with us that will last as long as you own your land. We are proud to continue to work closely with the more than 400 families who own protected properties in our area.



You can hear Marnie MacLean's sense of commitment and deep care for the land, as someone who has worked day in and day out on her family's Thompson-Finch farm when she says, "Every generation in my family was committed to and struggled with the concept of keeping the farm in the family, even if the family couldn't be farming it. It's really quite amazing to be a farmer and to know that the land you are farming will be available for agriculture forever."

16,861 ACRES 2002



Did you know?

- Each year, the DLC shepherds caring people who love their land through the process of protecting that land forever.
 In 2019, landowners permanently conserved nine properties on more than 1,400 acres: five farms that will continue to provide us with fresh, local food, and farm products, and four properties that will remain open and whose resources will be protected forever.
- Adhering to national standards for land trusts is key, so we ensure that we visit each protected property at least once each year to be certain that the terms of our conservation agreements are being followed. In pursuit of this goal in 2019, the DLC's stewardship staff hiked more than 341 miles!
- We provide assistance to landowners on managing your woodlands, planning for changes to your land, learning about invasive species, and attracting native birds and pollinators.
- We're happy to help owners of conserved properties stay current on management techniques free-of-charge.

Gathering Together to Celebrate the Land













On the Sunday of Columbus Day weekend, a gorgeous autumn day, we gathered at Helen and Everett Cook's spectacular Rosebrook property in Stanfordville to celebrate land conservation. More than 400 friends and supporters at our Fall Country Luncheon looked on as DLC President Becky Thornton was honored for her 30 years of service. After a delicious luncheon catered by the Farmer's Wife, guests were delighted and amazed by Birds of Prey's "Skyhunters in Flight" demonstration. Visit our website for more photos.











Photos: Mary Hilliard and Barbara Beatty

























Photos: Barbara Beatty

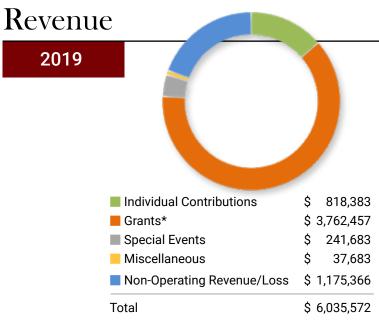
Thank you to all donors

Your support makes land conservation possible. With every gift you make, you're protecting more of our precious rural landscape for the future.

It's because of you that more than 43,500 acres of land have been conserved in our area – because you make conservation happen.



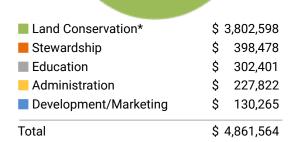
Photo: Kathy Landman



*Includes Purchase of Development Rights Grant

Expenses

2019



^{*}Includes Purchase of Development Rights Expenses

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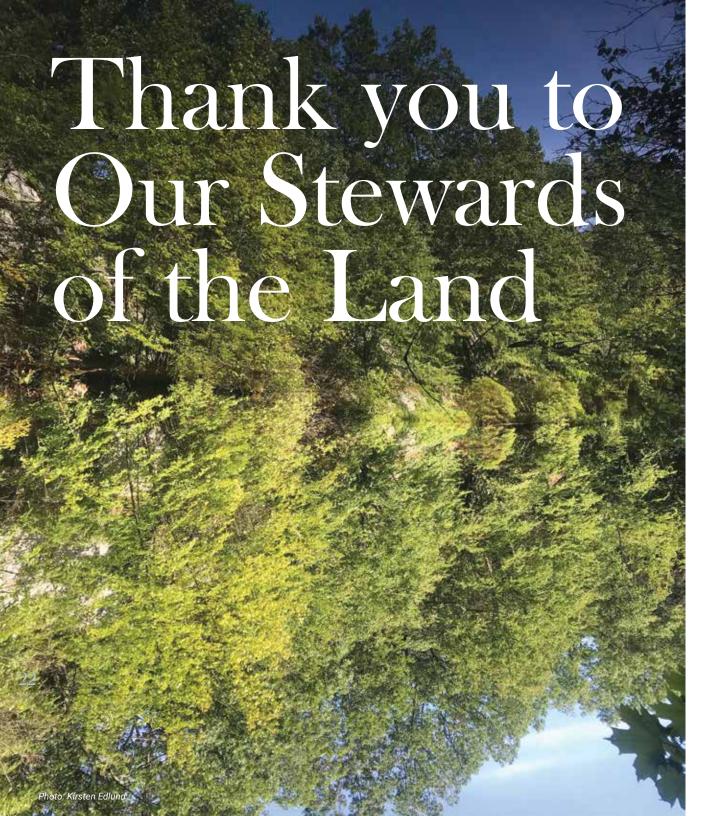




Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is dedicated to preserving the scenic, agricultural and environmental resources of Dutchess County, New York, and the surrounding area.

DLC, as a private non-profit land conservation organization, carries out its mission primarily by obtaining conservation easements on privately held land and monitoring these easements in perpetuity. Conservation easements, acquired through either donation or purchase, are legal agreements limiting future development in order to protect land for conservation purposes.

In addition, DLC provides professional assistance to landowners and municipalities to encourage environmentally sound planning, and educates the public on matters of land conservation and stewardship.



Conservation Easement Donors and Property Owners as of December 31, 2019

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Clark Hill, LLC
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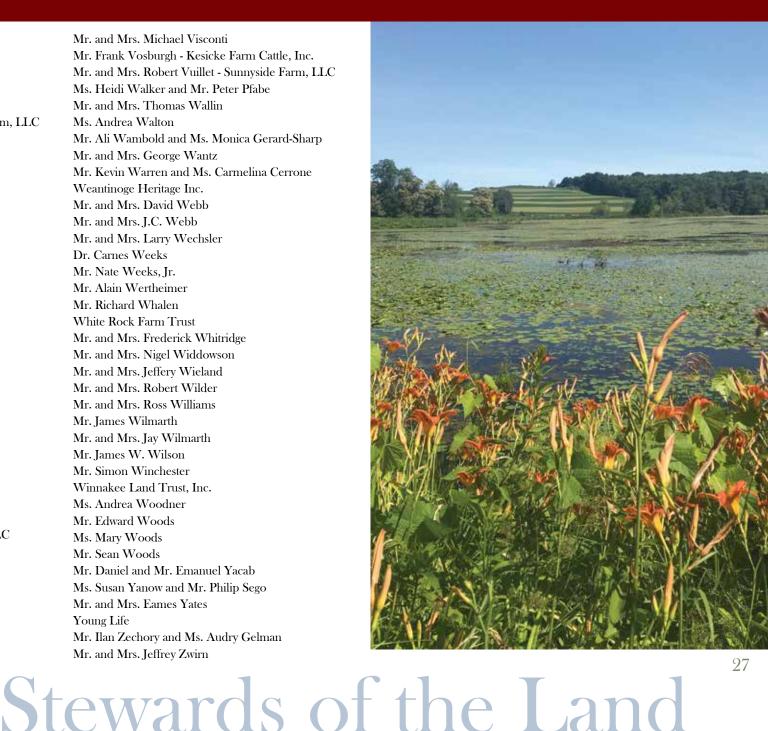
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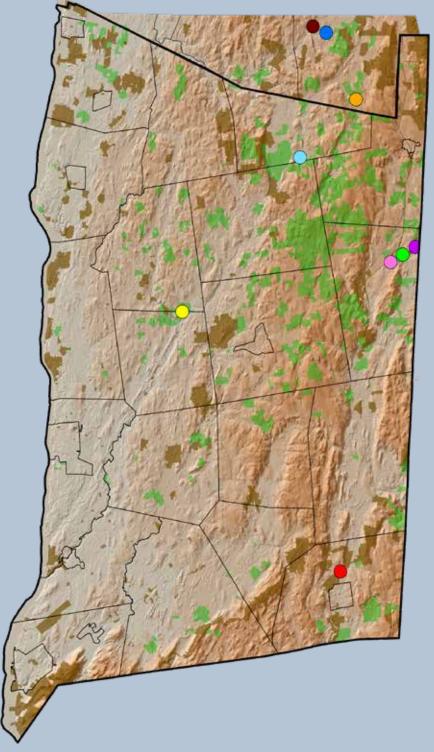
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