



GAINING GROUND

SPRING 2025



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Welcome 2025! As the calendar pages turn, I can't help a quick look back at a monumental 2024 when we added another 900 acres of conserved land surpassing our 47,000 acre goal! I still can't believe how staggering that number is as we celebrate our 40th anniversary this year, another major milestone. None of this could have been achieved without your dedication and enthusiasm, combined with that of our board, staff and volunteers!

In the following pages, you'll find our closing report which provides a glimpse at each property we were able to preserve last year. From a starter farm that has grown into a multi-faceted operation to a thoroughbred racehorse property; from a valuable tract of forest



land to a priceless multi-generation farm in operation for more than a century; each of these parcels tells a different story. These stories make up the fabric of this incredible area, and are very near and dear to my heart and to so many others.

I'm happy to report that we've already had our first few closings of the year. One such parcel belongs to Brooke Schooley and David Head who purchased the 128-acre property next to their home in North East with the intent of preserving it. By conserving this priceless land, they added to a critical mass of more than 3,800 acres of DLC-protected land within a three-mile radius. They have been very busy restoring the fields and forest health and we are just so grateful that they decided to protect these bountiful woodlands and the thriving wildlife that has made this place their home.

Elsewhere in these pages, you will find our beloved fauna column, "Nature of Things," highlighting the elusive

bobcat. You'll also find a recap of past events as well as our announcement of the return of our Road Rally coming up on May 17.

Co-chaired by Steven Benardete, Olivia Fussell, Ottavio Serena di Lapigio, John Teal, and Bob Wilder, the route will take drivers past many forever-protected properties and the day is sure to be filled with fun! In our commitment to environmental responsibility, the DLC is taking proactive steps by purchasing carbon offsets to compensate for emissions generated during the rally.

I am thrilled we have started a new column in the newsletter to highlight the contributions of our DLC community. We begin with a piece about one of our most inspiring volunteers, Diane Matsakis. Diane

and her husband Nick have helped clear invasives from DLC land, worked tables handing out information at our events and more. Diane is inspirational about the contributions each of us can make in our community. She reminds us that each of us can make a difference and that together, we can have an impact. On a solemn note, I am deeply saddened to report the passing of DLC long-time supporter, Trustee of the Land, and passionate historian and environmentalist, David Greenwood. Beloved by so many, David was a key part of our local community, and is sorely missed by so many of us. Our thoughts are with Nan and their family.

Huge thanks to all of you for your commitment to and support of our work. As they say, it takes a village.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Becky".



OUT & ABOUT

A look back at our winter events that brought people outdoors and taught them about the crucial role that land conservation plays in protecting the natural world.

HELPING OUT A HIDDEN GEM

Tucked in an out-of-the-way corner of the Town of Stanford lies the Sisters Hill Woods Preserve, held by the Winnakee Land Trust and permanently protected by a DLC conservation easement. On a chilly Saturday morning in December, volunteers from both organizations banded together to remove Burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) from the grounds of the preserve. Despite the frigid temperatures, they made quick work of the invasive plant that thrives in Dutchess County soils. The volunteers' energy and can-do spirit made a huge difference in improving this special place.

INVESTIGATING STONE WALLS

A hearty group of learners trudged through the ice and snow that overlay the trails of the Deer Pond Farm Audubon Sanctuary on the Pawling, NY-Sherman, CT border one cloudy January morning. They were there to learn the history of this land, a portion of which is protected by a DLC conservation easement, and the many stone walls that crisscross its hills, forests, and fields. Deer Pond Farm Director Cathy Hagadorn and DLC Director of Education Julie Hart led the group through woodlands and meadows and to the top of a stunning viewpoint, telling the story of the stone walls, how they were created and by whom, and the awe-inspiring depth of history that took place here. The enthusiastic attendees paused often on the trek to ask questions and learn more about the sanctuary and its place in history and as a nature preserve.

LEARNING ABOUT TREES

Folks who have attended this season's Earth Matters webinars sure do love trees! The six episodes in the winter webinar series have focused on the trees of our forests and hundreds have tuned in for each. Renowned author and professor Doug Tallamy revealed the intricacies of native oaks and their importance to our forests, while Brian Kelley of the Gathering Growth Foundation took us on a journey to explore "ancient giants" – the largest and oldest trees in the United States. These were but a couple of the webinars about trees that made the long nights a little brighter as we patiently waited for spring. 🌿



The DLC Road Rally is Back!
Saturday, May 17th

Embark on a scenic adventure through the breathtaking countryside and experience the natural beauty that the DLC protects and stewards.

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CLOSING REPORT

We open our Spring Season with a look back on the prior year's closings. Some of these properties in our annual "Closing Report" will be familiar to our more dedicated newsletter readers, while others will be brand new. The DLC is thrilled to announce we protected 900 new acres in 2024, almost double the acreage protected in 2023. As we pass 47,000 acres under conservation, we have our eyes on another major milestone: 50,000 acres in conservation in Dutchess County in our future.



Meadowland Farm



Cedar Ridge Farm

March 2024: Meadowland Farm, 117 acres, Clinton

Judah and Michele Kraushaar decided to preserve Meadowland Farm with an "emphasis that today you should conserve land for the benefit of all." The couple began their journey with Meadowland nearly 30 years ago, when the Kraushaars and their three young children were on the hunt for a 10 to 15-acre starter farm. Offering young farmers opportunities to begin their own businesses, as well as engaging the local community, Meadowland has flourished under their stewardship. Today, Meadowland Farm has fields in vegetable and fruit production, a 100-tree orchard, a small livestock operation and a roadside farmstand that sells their vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs and locally sourced products and more. You can visit their website at meadowlandfarmny.com.

May 2024: Cedar Ridge Farm, 247 acres, Pine Plains

Sue and Gary Lundy have owned and operated their thoroughbred racehorse farm for more than 30 years in Pine Plains. In that time, they have seen New York State's horse racing industry grow into the \$3 billion annual industry it is today and the changes that unplanned development brought to many towns, altering the character and identity of once-rural farming areas. Encouraged by their neighbor, DLC Board Member Sarah Chase, the Lundys worked with the DLC to create a comprehensive plan that both provides for the long-term protection of their farm through the purchase of development rights and the future of their existing foaling and broodmare operation.



West Mountain Woods

May 2024:
West Mountain Woods, 152 acres, Pawling

Characterized by scenic views and natural beauty, the West Mountain Ridge property, located in the Town of Pawling, contains truly varied topography of forest lands, streams, wetlands, steep slopes and ridgelines. It is the sweeping majesty of this stretch of land not far from the Appalachian Trail that led its owners to see the value in conserving all that it contains. Visible from Dodge Road, it was vital to preserve its open, scenic, and natural character. Restricting development not only keeps the land compatible with the natural surroundings, but also with the previously protected land located in its proximity. The property is almost entirely wooded and these woods are part of a large contiguous forest that extends for thousands of acres beyond the property boundary. It contains critical habitats for breeding and over-wintering, as well as wildlife corridors and wetlands. The Swamp River flows through the land and connects to a wetland complex of associated waterways that make their way to the Ten Mile River.



Bain Farm

October 2024:
Bain Farm, 152 acres, Copake

Bain Farm, owned by Edgar and Deborah Cohen, has been in the same family for nearly a century, and in farming for centuries before that. With its rolling hills, open farmland, and scenic views of the Taconic Mountain Range, this farm in the Town of Copake is the picture-perfect scene that depicts much of Columbia County's ruralness. Located on both sides of Route 22, Bain Farm is currently in active feed crop production that includes soy, corn, and grasses. In addition to its agricultural benefits, the farm also contains a significant wetland complex that is connected hydrologically with numerous tributaries that flow into the Roeliff Jansen Kill and Hudson River. The woodlands at the edges of the farm fields serve as vital nesting areas for songbirds and smaller mammals common in fields and forests. The protection of this land helps to keep the farmland in production while simultaneously conserving the land's scenic and natural character and the quality of its woodlands, streams and wetland habitats.



Obercreek Farm

October 2024: Obercreek Farm, 143 acres, Wappinger

Alex Reese and Alison Spear made Obercreek their permanent home in 2006 and revived the farm operation in 2012. Today, the Obercreek Farm Store sells fruits and vegetables grown on the farm, as well as a variety of local produce. In 2017, Alex and Alison began Obercreek Brewery, selling beer on-site at their tasting room and on the brewery's website, obercreekbrewing.com. The Reeses donated a conservation easement of 42 acres of the property in 2021 and this fall, the DLC was able to complete the preservation of an additional 143 acres through a purchase of development rights, ensuring this vital urban farmland will remain viable for agriculture in perpetuity. One of only a few agricultural properties still operating in the Town of Wappinger, its preservation helps maintain the agricultural heritage of this area of Dutchess County.

"We are incredibly grateful to these landowners for their diligence and heartfelt commitment and delighted that these agriculturally and ecologically important lands are now forever preserved."

DLC President Becky Thornton.



Page Property

November 2024: Page property, 93 acres, Pleasant Valley

Jason and Mary Elizabeth Page knew that their property, with its scenic views, large pond, open fields and meadows, rolling forested lands, flowing streams, and bountiful wetlands epitomized the scenic and natural character of Pleasant Valley when they protected it through a conversation easement with the DLC. Years spent viewing the diversity of wildlife that migrated through or lived in the woods and fields or along the shores of the lake made it abundantly clear just how important this land was. Highly visible from Netherwood Road, the property is also close to other permanently protected private land that is part of an unbroken forest extending for hundreds of acres. By conserving their land, the Pages added significant woodland to this forest that provides valuable habitat for a wide variety of animals, including butterflies, songbirds, bats, birds of prey, salamanders, turtles, flying squirrels, bobcats, and black bears. The wetlands and the lands surrounding it are vital for waterfowl, insects, and an assortment of rare plants, as well as the clean water they provide. The Pages' dedication to their land and their willingness to preserve it is a shining example of the benefits of private land conservation. 🌿

The protection of Meadowlands Farm, Cedar Ridge, and Obercreek Farm were supported by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets' Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) and Dutchess County's Partnership for Manageable Growth funding programs. Funding for the preservation of Bain Farm was provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets' FPIG program.

NATURE OF THINGS

Regina – a beautiful bobcat who lives and hunts in the fields and woods of Dutchess County – sat down for a chat with DLC Communications Manager Doug Ohlandt.



DOUG: It's a real thrill to meet you, Regina! You're quite elusive.

REGINA: Happy to meet you as well, Doug. And I should hope I'm elusive. My goal is to stay hidden from humans. You're lucky to have found me.

Q: Trust me – it wasn't easy. You have to pick the right time of day.

A: That is true. We bobcats – or *Lynx rufus* as we're known by humans who study us – are crepuscular. That means we're primarily active at twilight – early in the morning and around sunset in the evening.

Q: I've seen you a few times in the fields hereabouts and headed into the woods. Do you live nearby?

A: Yes, I have a main den – a hollow log in the forest – where I can sleep and give birth to my young, typically in the spring, although it's not uncommon for females to give birth to a second litter in the fall. The den also serves as a good hiding space for my kittens. While few will prey on adult bobcats in this area – only coyotes and male fishers – our young can be taken by foxes, eagles, bears, great horned owls, and even adult male bobcats. Those first six months of life are when the kittens need their mother most. That's when they'll learn to hunt and survive on their own.

Q: What are you teaching your kittens to hunt for?

A: Coneys, hasenpfeffer - rabbits and hares as you would call them. They're our absolute favorite. In these parts, that's mainly Eastern and New England cottontails. But if the hoppers are scarce, we have no problem hunting geese, chickens, just about any birds, squirrels, mice, chipmunks, insects, and even the occasional deer.

Q: A whole deer?

A: Less so the big bucks. More often the fawns. We're awesome at stalking our prey and ambushing them. They rarely see us coming. That's part of the reason we prefer lots of space and to be on our own. My territory covers four square miles and other females won't dare venture into it. Males will in the fall, but they're typically looking for something other than food.

Q: So, I have to ask about the bobcat name. Where does that come from?

A: Why, our beautiful bobbed tails, of course! No long tails for bobcats – not a chance. They would just get in the way. We bobcats view long tails as an encumbrance, and the cats who have them as very unfortunate. Wait – what's that smell!

Q: Looks like she's on the hunt again. Hope to catch up with you again soon, Regina.

A: And you as well, Doug. 🍃

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



For 2025, we created a new feature to honor the contributions of the many individuals who give so generously of themselves to the DLC as volunteers, trustees, stewards or staff members. To inaugurate the column, we begin with Diane Matsakis who, along with her husband Nick, is among our most devoted and ardent volunteers.

Q: How long have you lived in Dutchess County? What are your favorite parts about living here?

A: I've lived in Dutchess County for 36 years and, as a landscape artist, what I love the most is the stunning scenery that surrounds me. The breathtaking river views, forests that seem to stretch on forever, and the acres of rolling hills, there is so much beauty here! From the glistening sparkle of freshly fallen snow in wintertime or the sunlit glow of a cornfield on a summer's evening, I find it all so inspiring!

Q: How did you first find out about the DLC? What attracted you to the organization?

A: I'm a keen wildlife watcher and amateur naturalist. I saw an invasive plant-pulling event advertised in the Waterman Bird Club newsletter. My husband Nick and I have been battling invasive plants on our own little acre of land for quite some time, and once you know what these plants look like, you realize that they are everywhere! It can be quite demoralizing seeing swaths of forests covered with vines, wondering how much longer the trees can hold out, not to mention all the wildlife that depends on them. It's a great feeling being out in the fresh air, clearing trails, and working with a group of like-minded people tackling these issues. However small our personal contributions may be, it's good to know that together, we are making a difference!

Q: You and Nick volunteer in many different capacities with the DLC. What other events have you enjoyed?

A: Nick and I also enjoy tabling for the DLC. We are both still amazed by how much land has been preserved here in Dutchess County. It's rewarding passing that information on to others and letting them also know about all the wonderful volunteer and educational programs they can get involved with, right here on their doorstep!

Q: What would you want to tell someone who was thinking of volunteering with the DLC?

A: The natural world is under so much strain in general right now, what with climate change and unbridled development, I decided a few years ago that I needed to up my game and do something positive to help rather than just get depressed about it all. I took inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." I'm grateful to the DLC for giving me so many opportunities to do just that. 🌱

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT

This past January, the DLC celebrated its second closing of the year with the permanent preservation of 128 acres of expansive forests and fertile fields in the Town of North East.

Brooke Schooley and David Head purchased 20 acres in the Dutchess County area more than twenty years ago. Falling in love with the landscape and enjoying a variety of local discoveries, they negotiated to buy the house they were renting in 2003. As time went on, they became more attached to the land, spending their free time hiking and cross-country skiing, even developing an interest in birding, watching for woodthrush, warblers and more. While their property was already in conservation with the DLC, the 128-acre property next door was not, and was a point of concern to the neighborhood. When it came on the market in 2024, Brooke and David moved to purchase it with the idea of using it for walking, skiing and birding. Given their familiarity with the DLC and their desire to preserve the land for future generations, they started working on a conservation easement almost immediately after purchase.



Their stewardship protects bountiful woodlands which rank highly for their ability to ensure a thriving habitat for wildlife and native species. The conserved property adds to a critical mass of more than 3,800 acres of DLC-protected land within a three-mile radius. Wide tracts of unbroken woods are part of a wider forest that stretches for hundreds of acres and abuts additional properties protected under DLC easements. “Creating an easement on this property was especially compelling given how the forestry management practices promoted by DLC have evolved over time,” Brooke says. “We were able to proceed with confidence that the easement would allow us to actively manage these extensive woodlands to encourage new growth and wildlife.”

White pines and eastern hemlocks tower above the forest floor, while eastern red cedars edge and dot grasslands. Among the deciduous trees are a wide assemblage of sugar maples, black birches, red oaks, black cherry and American hophornbeam. These forested uplands provide important habitat for the many animals who forage, breed and live there. “There are a lot of bears and coyotes of course, and I’ve seen a bobcat on five separate



occasions,” says Brooke, not to mention countless smaller mammals. The property is in the watershed of the Ten Mile River, a tributary to the Housatonic River. A wide variety of turtles, snakes, and toads, along with numerous salamanders, call the wetlands here home.

The meadows on the property include high quality farmland soils. The couple, who have been actively working to restore the open fields while managing the invasives in the woodlands, would love to have someone graze cows or sheep in the fields to keep them from overgrowing.

“It’s like stepping back 200 years because it is all so unspoiled. It really is a special property,” Brooke says. In fact, the land tells an even longer story because it overlies a bedrock of Stockbridge marble formed some 450 million years ago during the uplift of the nearby Taconic Mountains. Regardless of which part of history you might glimpse looking out in these lovely woods, they tell a pretty spectacular story. 🌿

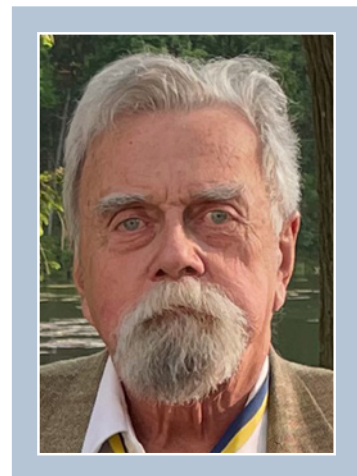
IN MEMORIAM

David Greenwood

Long-time DLC supporter David Greenwood passed away on December 23, 2024. A well-known and beloved local historian, David served on the boards of Dutchess and Putnam counties' landmarks preservation societies and as an overseer of Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. He was the historian for the Village of Millbrook and the Town of Washington and the parish historian for St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Lithgow, as well as a member of the Dutchess County Historical Society. In 2022, David was awarded the Edmund J. Winslow Local Government Historian Award of Excellence by the Association for Public Historians of New York State and the New York State Museum for his work coordinating Millbrook's annual historic calendar project for 28 years.

David was equally passionate about the arts and oversaw the entire K-12 arts program in the Carmel Central School District in Putnam County from 1974 to 2004. He then taught Art History and Aesthetics for another seven years at the Millbrook School. He served on the Dutchess and Putnam County Arts Councils and on an arts review panel for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Art in Public Places project.

David had a fierce commitment to the natural environment and land conservation, evident in his unwavering support for the DLC as a donor and avid volunteer and the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies, as well as his many years serving on the Town of Washington's Conservation Advisory Commission, including a long tenure as the commission's chair. He will be deeply missed by the DLC and the historical and arts communities of the Hudson Valley and will be remembered for his dedication to the local land and its people. 🌿



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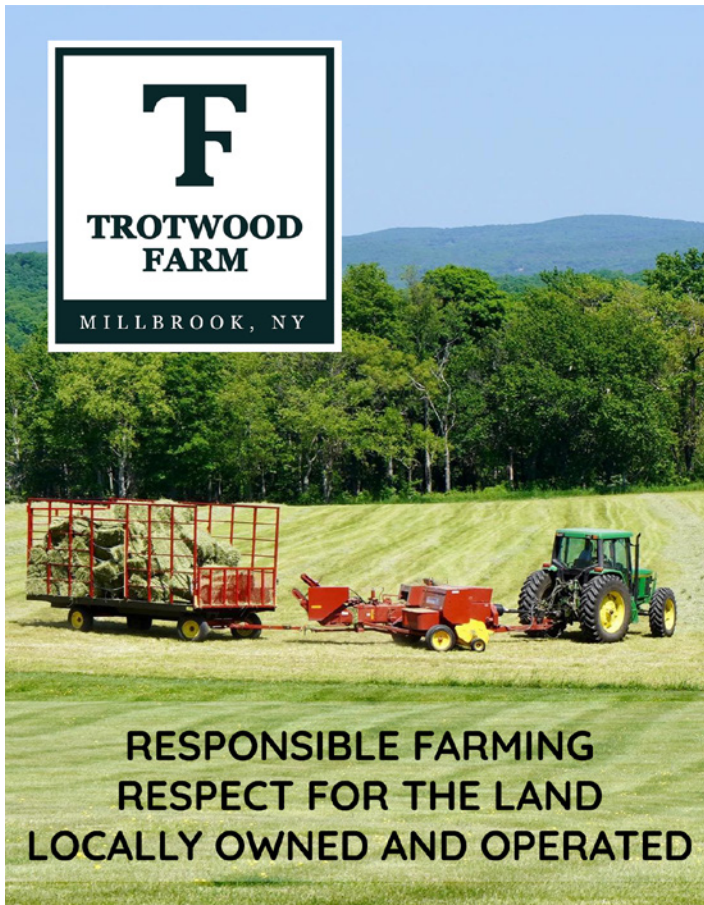


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