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# IV. Recommended Actions and Implementation

## Resource Management and Protection

Management and protection of open space resources require a coordinated, regional approach. The following recommended actions are based on the needs and findings of the previous sections. These recommendations include detailed action steps as clear guidelines for implementing and maintaining a “living plan.”

### The Challenge: Fragmentation

During meetings with stakeholders, municipal officials, and land trusts, we consistently heard about one overarching challenge to open space protection in Ulster County: *fragmentation*. Fragmentation occurs at many levels: disconnections between organizations and programs concerned with open space, discontinuity between ecosystems, and physical barriers between communities.

#### Organizational Fragmentation

Ulster County is composed of 24 municipalities: 20 towns, 3 villages, and a city. New York State enables each municipality to be responsible for its own land use future. There also are numerous nonprofit organizations with missions to protect natural, cultural and historic resources. In addition, dozens of state and federal programs and regulations exist to protect particular segments of the environment. These entities, and the public, all compete for access, funding, and consideration on decisions that affect open space. While fragmentation is a common issue nationwide, it is compounded by the “Home Rule” environment in New York.

There is a great need to coordinate and integrate these decision-makers and government programs to address the various aspects of open space. The lack of a regional forum or accessible framework for articulating shared objectives for stakeholders, such as nonprofit organizations founded on the principles of conservation and sound development, also limits our ability to implement shared goals.

Lack of continuity is also a challenge. Changes in funding programs, their objectives, and turnover in staff and volunteer boards pose challenges for consistent decisions regarding open space resources. Frequent changes limit the “institutional memory”. Organizations lose their understanding and ability to implement plans and respond to needs in the built and natural environment, which require steady, ongoing care.

### **Resource Fragmentation**

Open space resources cross municipal jurisdictional boundaries. Differing protection efforts may result in the resources becoming spatially fragmented. Ecological communities also rely on corridors to make them viable. Small disruptions may have large consequences. Recreation resources, such as trails, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and other connections between communities are also often fragmented.

## **The Response: Integration**

### **A Role for County Government in Open Space Protection**

The county can be a key contributor toward open space protection, taking a leadership role in providing technical assistance, funding, coordination and program support. It can foster and coordinate important “horizontal” and “vertical” linkages between different layers of government and various sectors (e.g., public, private, and nonprofit) as well as provide education and technical assistance to these different actors in their efforts to plan for and protect open space.

This Open Space Plan aims to create a system of strong linkages between the many issues, people, places, and resources that need to work together to protect open space. It will provide a bridge between protected areas, municipalities, the county, New York State, non-governmental organizations (including nonprofits), and the private sector; and reflect local, regional, and state goals for open space, recreation, and natural resource protection and utilization. This will be a “living plan” that acknowledges the fact that successful implementation is an ongoing process. It will be continually re-examined as new ideas, information, funding sources, people and programs evolve and serve as a resource for decision-makers to use for a range of short-, medium- and long-term concerns while following through on its goals and visions.

### **The Roles of County Departments**

The roles of county departments is defined, in part, by their statutory responsibilities. Many of these departments, including the Planning Board, Health Department, and Department of Public

Works, already play roles in open space protection. Personnel in these departments have significant expertise and technical capabilities that are not present at the local level. The plan calls for an expansion of these responsibilities, including additional technical assistance to decision-makers and organizations, new program initiatives, and measurement of these activities against the objectives of the plans.

Within this framework, the Ulster County Planning Board and the Department of the Environment have primary roles. The Planning Board's role stems from its statutory responsibilities under General Municipal Law Article 12-b, which includes comprehensive planning and local land use controls, and its program responsibilities as established by the Ulster County Legislature. The Department of the Environment (DOE), established by Ulster County Local Law number 17 of 2007, has a coordinating role for all environmental activities in the purview of other county departments. An ongoing relationship between the Planning Board and the DOE is necessary to assure that policies and programs for the protection of open space are well coordinated.

### **The Role of Local Municipalities**

The OSP supports local governments' role in open space protection utilizing the tools available as part of land use regulations, and authority found in state enabling legislation. Communities should recognize the importance of the comprehensive planning efforts in establishing policies for open space protection and integrating them into a vision that encompasses community centers, transportation and economic development goals. Local level Conservation Advisory Commissions (CACs) also have an important role to play. CACs have multiple responsibilities that relate to the protection of open space and the environment in general, including the development of an inventory and map of open space, identifying open areas within the municipality which are earmarked for preservation. A CAC may also be designated as a Conservation Board with the authority to make recommendations concerning development proposals. Communities may also wish to consider placing a CAC member on the Planning Board and vice versa.

Recognizing that the success of open space protection requires coordination beyond municipal boundaries, the plan recommends that the county play a role in assisting local governments' development of the tools necessary for open space protection including funding. Funding is a means to leverage other monies, with the county playing a supporting role in most instances. Funding would also be used to support ongoing county programs such as Farmland Preservation.

# Open Space Plan Principles

These Principles synthesize the goals and vision articulated by the numerous stakeholders that participated in the plan and the findings of the natural resource inventory and planning analyses conducted in the development of this plan.

- 1: *Identify critical natural resource systems.*
- 2: *Preserve and protect* open space, unique natural areas and heritage areas and sites, wetlands, water and woodland resources, scenic views, areas of natural beauty, and the rural character of Ulster County.
- 3: *Integrate and link planning, development and environmental goals* and efforts by creating a coordinated policy and management framework.
- 4: *Integrate considerations of community well-being*, economic prosperity, and ecological integrity.
- 5: *Protect water resources* and the critical watershed areas of the county.
- 6: *Enhance the viability of existing farming* operations and agricultural businesses, and encourage new ones to be formed.
- 7: *Protect and enhance the county's most valuable open space* landforms and natural features with coordinated planning and safeguard policies.
- 8: *Safeguard priority biological diversity areas* by promoting biologically-sensitive land use and increasing research and understanding.
- 9: *Create, preserve, enhance and provide managed access* to parks, hiking trails, active and passive recreation facilities, and historic resources.
- 10: *Balance consideration of present and future generations* through sustainable development (i.e., development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.)

## ***What kind of world will we leave for our children?***

*Principle #10 is based on the definition of “sustainability” coined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1983. The idea of sustainability is founded on the concept of “inter-generational transfer” or inheritance. This was a key concern of our stakeholders.*



## Recommended Actions

Two types of recommended actions follow: “Strategic Actions” and “Resource Actions.” Many of the recommendations listed in the Resource Actions in this plan are already performed by various county departments, boards and contract agencies. However, the Strategic Actions will place a stronger focus on the proper coordination of these activities as well as the links between conservation and development activities and the agencies and organizations involved in this work. In essence, this plan recommends that the county provide the strategic planning and management capacity needed to coordinate and implement county-wide goals for both open space preservation and growth. The plan also specifically recommends funding to aid in the protection of critical resource areas when leveraged funding partnerships are available.

### Strategic Actions

#### Leadership, Linking, Learning and Leverage

There four key strategic roles for the county in open space conservation that are recommended for funding:

**Leadership:** fostering leadership in open space conservation that...

- helps citizens understand the county's open space goals.

- helps citizens understand how they contribute to achieving the goals.

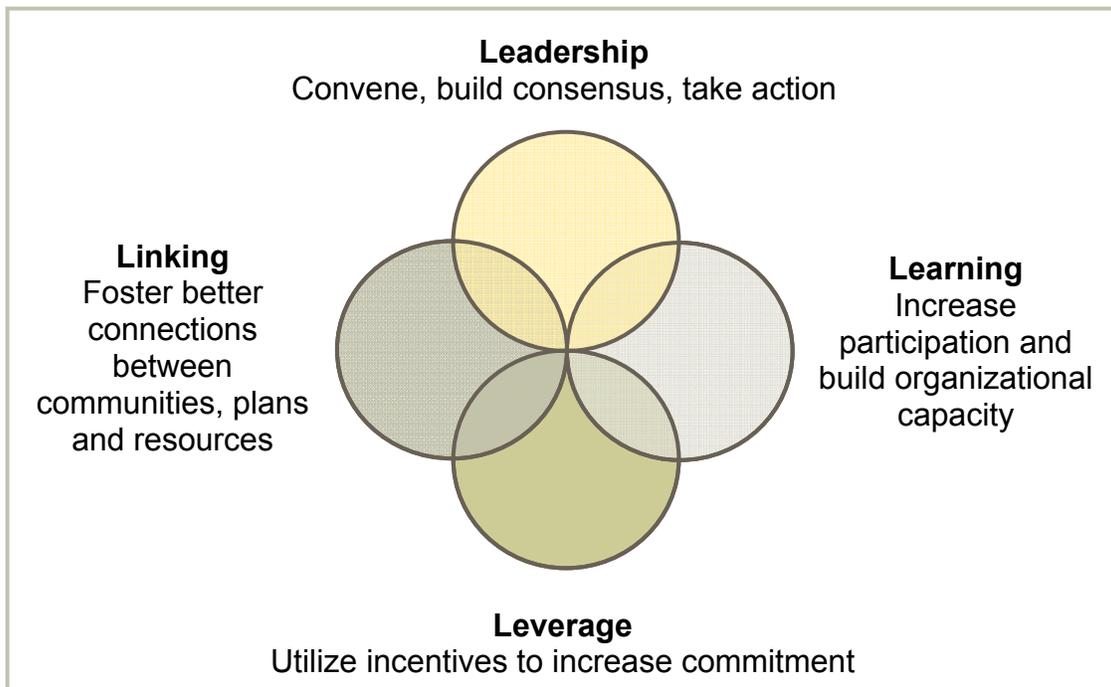
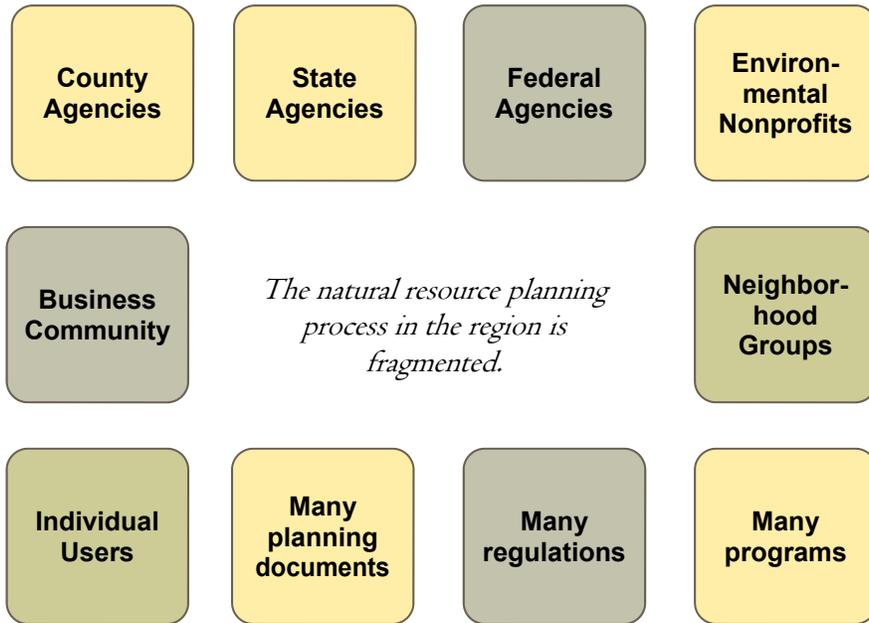
- shares information with citizens on the progress and performance of the plan.

**Linking:** creating linkages between different communities, levels of government, public and private sectors, as well as linkages between the natural resources we aim to protect with the planning tools we can use to protect them.

**Learning:** building organizational capacity in communities and groups to understand their natural resources and better utilize the tools to protect them.

**Leverage:** utilizing existing funds and financial tools to leverage greater commitment from partners.

This plan recommends a coordinated approach to reduce fragmentation



## Strategy #1 – Leadership:

*Convene, Build Consensus, and Take Action*

### Strategic Recommendation #1

#### Form Open Space Partnership

Form a partnership from a broad range of representative stakeholders based on the principles of this plan to advise the Legislature on open space protection.

Ulster County government shall form a partnership to pursue the vision and goals of this plan, provide leadership in setting open space policies and to bring together a coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations to pool resources and ideas on open space. The goal is to build Ulster County's leadership role in the protection of open space by adopting open space resource management principles and fostering greater public understanding of the goals and principles of open space conservation.

#### Implementation

The Open Space Partnership shall recommend policy and funding actions to the Ulster County Legislature related to open space through the appropriate legislative committees. It shall be co-chaired by the EMC and the Ulster County Planning Board.

The legislature shall appoint representative members of public, private, and non-profit sectors to work with existing organizations to gather ideas, information, issues, needs, and barriers in open space protection, including stakeholders from:

- County Government, including the EMC and UC Planning Board
- Local Government (Supervisors and Planning)
- Agricultural Associations
- Environmental Protection Organizations
- Land Trusts
- Business/Economic Development Entities
- Community-Based Organizations
- Youth/Education
- Regional Organizations with Related Missions

**The Open Space Partnership shall:**

- Consider and prioritize funding needs for the implementation of this plan.
- Develop an outreach program that provides educational materials.
- Consider, in an integrated way, the wider economic, social and environmental implications of decisions and actions.
- Take a long-term rather than short-term view when making decisions and taking action.
- Ensure regular meetings of the Open Space Partnership by coordinating policy and technical issues of the respective staff and committee work.
- Publish an annual report and updates to the plan and disseminate them to municipalities throughout the county.
- Establish links between village, town, city, county, state and federal policies and plans (e.g., referrals, capital expenditures, comprehensive plans, NRI, and open space policies).
- Work with municipalities, business leaders and nonprofits and other stakeholders to identify open space issues and needs.
- Develop partnerships with other levels of government, nonprofits and private stakeholders.
- Continually raise awareness with stakeholders and residents by maintaining an up-to-date database and clearinghouse, and disseminating information.

**Open Space Partnership Committees:**

Technical committees may be formed on the basis of resource areas and/or specific programs, such as the clearinghouse or capacity building activities, to:

- Develop and adopt ranking criteria for making recommendations on priority conservation and growth areas.
- Work with municipalities to help identify their open space priorities and areas of interconnections between each municipality.
- Bring recommendations to Open Space Partnership for review and adoption into an Open Space Work Program.
- Advocate and promote good management practices of inventory, needs analysis, etc.
- Foster community identification and acceptance of county and local initiatives; work toward coordinated incorporation of policy recommendations into local and county governments.
- Develop a proactive approach to ensure that local comprehensive or open space plans identify priority areas.
- Advise Open Space Partnership on technical merits of open space funding initiatives.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of technical issues.

## Strategy #2 – Linking

*Foster better connections between communities, plans and resources*

### Strategic Recommendation #2a

Adopt a “toolbox” approach with multiple strategies for open space protection

**Develop broadly supported “toolbox” coupled with technical assistance.**

A toolbox offers a powerful means to protect open space resources. The open space protection toolbox includes programs such as agricultural districts, land use regulations such as overlay zones, support programs, such as Section 480-a of Real Property Tax Law, acquisition tools, such as purchase of development rights, and other planning programs, such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway. This policy recommendation recognizes the significant diversity of resources and communities that exist in the county and is responsive to this need.

### Implementation

Action steps to support the use of tools:

- Review local regulatory practices with respect to use of open space tools.
- Utilize Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) opportunities within the context of a comprehensive approach, rather than as a stand alone tool.
- Encourage the use of parkland/recreation fees.
- Coordinate Open Space Work Program with county GIS to ensure standard formats are used that will allow the integration of municipal and county level mapping.
- Encourage creation of conservation easements.
- Provide for subdivision review by the Ulster County Planning Board.
- Encourage the use of conservation subdivision ordinances.
- Support public access requirements for waterfront development.
- Support use of Critical Environmental Areas to protect open space.
- Discourage alienation of parkland.
- Support broadening of forest management policy 480a.

## Strategic Recommendation #2b

### Create an Open Space Clearinghouse

Develop and maintain an Open Space database and clearinghouse designed to help municipalities, businesses, nonprofit groups and local citizens to find plans, planning tools and critical resource information to be applied to their decisions.

It should be accessible to the public and coordinated among municipalities and county departments involved in open space protection activities. The clearinghouse should contain information on the plan's open space resource areas, local planning and zoning, regional planning, economic development, housing, transportation and best practices related to open space protection.

### Implementation

- Provide resource database for public access to county and local plans and develop a reporting requirement to ensure that the partnership receives updated open space information and protection activities.
- Utilize “toolbox approach” with links to other plans
- Utilize NRI categories as outlined in the plan (water resources, protected open space, etc.)
- Coordinate countywide GIS activities.
- The following planning categories shall be considered in the clearinghouse to organize “toolboxes”:
  - ◇ **Organizational:** capacities and skills, access to information and people; non-profit organizations, private companies and philanthropies, public sector agencies.
  - ◇ **Technical:** GIS data/maps, transportation studies, zoning data/maps, development data (e.g., permits, real estate data).
  - ◇ **Financial:** direct funding, matching grants, purchase/transfer of development rights (PDRs/TDRs), tax incentives, private sponsorships, philanthropic resources, in-kind contributions.
  - ◇ **Legal:** varying jurisdictions, federal, state, and local regulation and enforcement.
  - ◇ **Human/Social:** public awareness, educational programs, citizen support, interest groups, constituencies, relationships.
  - ◇ **Political:** inter-municipal cooperation, local initiatives.

## Strategic Recommendation #2c

### Use a Regional Approach

Understand relationships between protection at the state and federal levels and implementation and concern at the local level by utilizing a regional approach in the county's open space protection role as a critical link between policies and programs at the federal, state, regional and local levels.

Ulster County will coordinate and implement open space protection activities that are responsive to the regional nature of open space resources and the need for local involvement. The county will use its substantial technical expertise within its existing departments, the ability to influence policies both at a local level as well as at the state and even the federal level.

### Implementation

- Work with surrounding counties on issues of regional concern, such as protection of watersheds and viewsheds, designation of byways, access to cultural/historic and recreational resources, and other open space issues that require a regional approach.
- Encourage state to re-fund the Local Environmental Assistance Program (LEAP) which reimburses Town and Counties up to 50% of county and municipality expenditures.
- Formalize a system in which tax sale properties are evaluated for recreational use and/or open space/natural resources protection before being offered to public sale.
- Promote use of Community Preservation Act funding at the local level and recommend that county governments be made eligible participants.
- Continue to represent county and local open space issues on the DEC Region 3 Open Space Advisory Committee.
- Work with local governments to ensure that their Open Space Plans are responsive to regional goals.

## Strategic Recommendation #2d

### Integrate open space planning activities

Create a system of strong linkages between the many issues, people, places, and resources that need to work together to protect open space.

### Implementation

- Through technical and policy committees of the Partnership shall:
  - ◊ Identify interconnecting open space resources in natural resources inventories and in local and county Comprehensive Plans and other relevant plans.
  - ◊ Standardize Natural Resource Inventories to improve coordination among users (i.e., municipalities, non-profits, land trusts).
  - ◊ Work with municipalities to develop policies, priorities and interconnections via inter-municipal agreements.
  - ◊ Link to referrals and local plans to Ulster County Comprehensive Plan and other county and state plans.
- Encourage cooperation and cost-sharing among municipalities through “intermunicipal agreements” (IMAs) that can improve how they deal with open space resources that cross municipal lines. In addition to creating better linkages between communities, in practical terms, IMAs can improve economies of scale and avoid duplication of services.
- Support collaborative grant-writing.



*This painting by Todd Samara of Kingston shows the typical village, hamlet, or crossroads in Ulster County that used to be the commercial hubs of activity in rural areas of the county. The Greenway Compact and Ulster County Main Streets Program (opposite page) identify strategies for revitalizing these areas in tandem with economic development and open space protection. These are examples of integrated planning recommended by this plan.*

## Strategic Recommendation #2e

Become a Greenway Compact county and encourage municipalities to join

Become a Greenway Compact county to allow Ulster County and its municipalities to enter into an agreed upon regional policy framework concerning its open spaces, natural resources, and development patterns.

Greenway Compacts have a proven success in multiple Hudson Valley counties.

### Box 10: The Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact

The Hudson River Valley Greenway encompasses 259 municipalities within 13 counties along the river. As of June 2006, all Ulster County communities can voluntarily become Greenway communities and participate in this regional planning effort to preserve scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources in the Hudson Valley. The Greenway effort encompasses the following:

- Natural and cultural resource protection,
- Economic development, including tourism, agriculture and urban redevelopment,
- Public access,
- Regional planning, and
- Heritage and environmental education.

Benefits of joining the Compact include funding and technical assistance from the State toward these goals. There are additional incentives for communities that agree to inter-municipal coordination. It is important to note that municipalities choosing to participate do not forfeit any of their Home Rule powers. To join the Compact and receive its benefits, communities are not required to make sweeping revisions to their local plans. Three basic provisions are required: that they (1) agree to work with neighboring communities on Greenway goals, (2) amend current local zoning to consider Greenway goals, and (3) agree that future plans will be consistent with the Greenway Compact Program.

For more information, see [www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us](http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us)

### Box 11: Ulster County Main Streets Program

In 2007, the Ulster County Planning Board began developing a countywide Main Streets program to provide communities with support for developing local strategies for revitalization. This program supports this plan's goal of identifying priority growth areas linked to hamlets and villages as part of an integrated smart growth and open space protection strategy.

The "Main Street Approach" was created and has been developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation a generation ago in response to the disinvestment in downtowns that has occurred as a result of sprawl throughout the United States. Over 2000 communities across the country have successfully adopted the approach to revitalize their main streets. While the program began as a part of the historic preservation movement, it has become a key feature in efforts to protect open space through "smart growth."

For more information, see: [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)

## Strategic Recommendation #2f

### Recognize “Priority Conservation Areas” and “Priority Growth Areas”

Identify where the greatest efforts of open space conservation need to be applied as well as where compact development activities can be considered.

#### Implementation

- Continue to refine a database and approach that identifies both conservation and development areas.
- Identify and monitor threats and opportunities to critical resources
- Encourage compact development that is designed to:
  - ◊ Preserve open space.
  - ◊ Protect valuable and viable agricultural land.
- Provide technical assistance to municipalities on implementing tools for conservation and compact development in plans and zoning ordinances

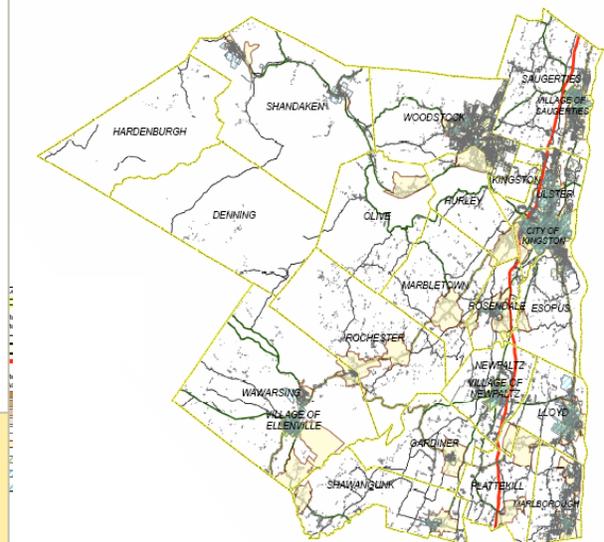
#### Open Space Database and Clearinghouse

The Planning Board has compiled extensive information on planning tools, concepts, financial and legal resources, and “Best Management Practices” for open space protection. By linking this set of tools to a capacity building and educational program for individuals, communities, and decision-makers, the county will provide access to more consistent, standardized methods for a coordinated approach for development and conservation among our communities. This “toolbox” will provide guidance to local leaders and others for decisions regarding development that supports “Priority Growth Areas” while protecting open space.

#### Identify “Priority Growth Areas”

“Priority Growth Areas” are places identified with potential for focused development in and around existing centers, rather than encouraging new construction on outlying open space or farmland. Priority Growth Areas also help us take best advantage of existing infrastructure. They are identified by mapping where development potential is most feasible based on infrastructure, zoning, population densities, and vacant parcels.

*This map identifies development in and around existing centers to help make decisions about achieving a more compact land-use pattern.*



## Strategy #3 – Learning

*Increase participation and build technical and organizational capacity*

### Strategic Recommendation #3

Improve abilities to utilize open space protection tools

Build capacity among decision makers to understand their natural resources and better utilize the tools to protect them.

#### Implementation

- Support the development of strong and stable local planning, policy and decision-making capabilities through technical assistance, training, program and pilot project development, and public education and outreach. Utilize the capacity building program to train staff and officials of localities as well as County government.
- Partner with leading community-based and non-profit organizations to assist in education.
- Develop curriculum for workshops, seminars, and capacity building programs (see a recommended outline of subjects in Appendix B3: Capacity Building Topics)
- Utilize successful methods of capacity-building programs, including “train-the-trainers,” “learning-by-doing,” study trips, and “Sister Cities” approaches.
- Provide training for legislators on open space planning and related issues.
- Create a position to work with municipalities.
- Encourage participation in Hudson River Greenway Compact.
- Work with municipalities to create/improve/update their:
  - ◊ Natural Resources Inventories
  - ◊ comprehensive plans
  - ◊ related plans (e.g., open space plans, recreation plans, Local Waterfront Redevelopment Program)
  - ◊ zoning statutes
  - ◊ site plan review, and design review capacity
  - ◊ community participation and outreach methods

## Strategy #4 – Leverage:

*Collaborate with stakeholders to increase funding and commitment to open space goals and policies*

### Strategic Recommendation #4

Utilize incentives to increase commitment to open space goals and policies

Provide funding for critical open space protection activities, as well as maintaining and improving recreational resources, that seeks partnership in funding and broad policy support for open space protection efforts in this plan.

Collaboration on funding and commitments for projects and programs will increase “ownership” of open space goals and policies. In addition, as the funds to purchase properties may not always be available, it is critical that other tools are used to leverage greater commitments from participants based on willingness to conserve open space. Any dedicated funding source for a leveraged open space program should have broad public support and will need to be approved by the County Legislature.

A 2005 Trust for Public Land (TPL) study for the county found that a dedicated revenue source to fund open space program is needed and can be best financed in one of two ways: through general obligation bonds or dedicated property tax levy.

### Implementation

- Develop criteria for a county-sponsored grant program to help localities match funding for projects in line with the goals and recommendations of this plan.
- Provide funds to match state, federal and non-profit sources consistent with the recommendations in this plan.
- Explore the feasibility of setting up a non-profit county conservancy to accept donations.
- Participate in Hudson River Greenway Compact.
- Provide incentives to support local comprehensive planning, open space planning, and zoning activities that follow this plan’s principles and goals.
- Link county and local government capital project funding to conformance with open space principles and goals.
- The County shall deal fairly and openly with property owners on a willing seller/willing buyer basis.

# Resource Actions

## I. Protected Open Space

Identify, permanently protect, and manage critical open space resources and systems



**Need:** Protected open space and other critical natural resources require identification, policies for protection, ongoing management and stewardship, coordination among municipalities, agencies and nonprofits, and consistency among various plans and programs.

**Overarching Goal:** Preserve and protect open space, unique natural areas, cultural landscapes and sites, wetlands, water and woodland resources, scenic views, and areas of natural beauty by protecting the open space “systems” in which they operate and the rural character of Ulster County.

**Protected Open Space Partners:**

- Ulster County Legislature
- Ulster County Planning Board
- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- New York City Department of Environmental Protection
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Ulster County Municipalities
- Ulster County Land Trusts and Conservation Nonprofits
- Regional Organizations with Related Missions

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p><b>I. Protect critical open space resources and systems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Support the implementation of the acquisition of areas identified New York State Open Space Conservation Plan.</li> <li>b. Work to ensure that Priority Conservation Areas are identified and incorporated into Open Space Plans at all levels.</li> <li>c. Work with area land trusts to establish inventory practices to track easements; work with proper authorities to allow better inventory practices and wider knowledge of protected land.</li> <li>d. Encourage proper land management by offering land and site management planning assistance for forestry, agricultural and other protected landscapes.</li> </ul>



## I. Protected Open Space, continued

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p><b>2. Develop shared open space protection goals with municipalities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with municipalities to develop guidelines and land use controls to protect critical open space resources and systems.</li> <li>b. Aid municipalities in implementing open space protection funding programs.</li> <li>c. Review existing protected open space resources and areas identified in local and state plans for gaps where the County should play a role.</li> <li>d. Address appropriateness of adjoining land uses as they impact protected open space.</li> <li>e. Work with municipalities to ensure that local open space plans coordinate across municipal boundaries and meet regional needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Form partnerships for the protection of open space.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Facilitate the development of partnerships and funding for open space protection at the local level, including working with non-profits.</li> <li>b. Work with partners to identify potential links between protected areas that meet the needs of multiple resources, such as recreation and biodiversity.</li> <li>c. Develop local capacity to meet resource protection and related community goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Develop management program</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Adopt a policy and procedure concerning county lands, including lands acquired for tax delinquencies consistent with the resource areas and recommendations in this plan. (See item 2f under Recreational Resources, below.)</li> <li>b. Support the establishment of an entity that will be part of, or work in concert with, the land trust collaboration model similar to the recent inter-municipal land conservation initiatives unveiled by Dutchess County.</li> <li>c. Ensure that conservation easements are understood when transferred to new landowners.</li> </ul>

## 2. Water Resources



### Protect and manage water resources

**Need:** Water resources are subject to multiple levels of governmental protection that require coordination. Water resources protection must be related to a bigger picture approach that operates at the watershed level. Drinking water resources require special protection for public health and future water needs. Flooding is an increased concern as the dynamic processes of streams, development, and climate change increase over time.

**Overarching Goal:** Protect water resources and the critical watershed areas of the county by ensuring that Ulster County meets New York State requirements for water quality, that water resources are safe and accessible for recreational purposes and support biodiversity.

#### Water Resources Partners:

Ulster County Legislature  
 Ulster County Planning Board  
 Ulster County Department of the Environment  
 Ulster County Environmental Management Council  
 Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District  
 New York City Department of Environmental Protection  
 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Ulster County Municipalities  
 Regional Organizations with Related Missions

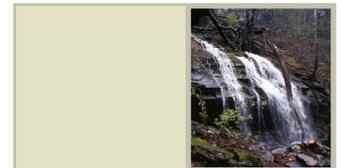
Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>1. Utilize the EPA's Watershed Approach Framework to prioritize and manage water resources.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with all stakeholders to develop management alternatives that meet resource protection goals.</li> <li>b. Identify, update and coordinate overlapping water and land-use plans, regulations and funding sources.</li> <li>c. Participate in the technical advisory group of New York City West-of-Hudson watershed for continued management for watershed protection and cooperation among watershed towns in Ulster County.</li> <li>d. Encourage municipalities to protect riparian corridors and natural drainage areas that can be used to establish a buffer along stream/river corridors.</li> </ol>



## 2. Water Resources, continued

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p><b>2. Protect water quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Update the county’s water quality strategy.</li> <li>b. Implement and continuously update the countywide storm water program for the management of storm water systems, monitoring of discharges, and cleanup of pollution as necessary to comply with federal statutes.</li> <li>c. Utilize “Best Management Practices” and a Multiple Barrier Approach to protect water resources from encroaching development.</li> <li>d. Identify and map important surface and groundwater sources and recharge areas for all aquifers.</li> <li>e. Develop policies that guide development away from flood prone and aquifer recharge areas and provide for open space and aquifer-friendly activities for these areas.</li> <li>f. Encourage communities to adopt clearing and grading and other land use regulations to protect water quality.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Protect waterways</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Utilize funding and programmatic goals from stream and corridor management regulations to protect riparian areas.</li> <li>b. Pursue designation of Black Creek as a Wild River, and Upper Esopus and Upper and Lower Beaverkill as recreational rivers under NYS Environmental Conservation Law, Title 27 of Article 15, and help coordinate municipalities to develop stream corridor management plans.</li> <li>c. Encourage the establishment of wetland mitigation policies at a county level.</li> <li>d. Encourage a coordinated approach that recognizes State, Federal and local responsibilities for wetland and vernal pool protection.</li> <li>e. Continue to upgrade and refine the wetland database at local and regional levels.</li> <li>f. Support state legislation to designate the Esopus Creek, Sawkill, Wallkill and other Hudson River watershed tributaries as Inland Waterways.</li> <li>g. Support implementation of the Esopus Creek and Neversink River Stream Corridor Management Plans.</li> </ul>

## 2. Water Resources, continued



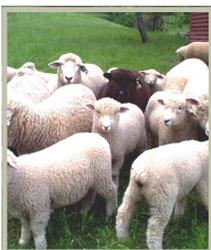
Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>4. Ensure safe and adequate drinking water resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Update the necessary code with specific reference to protecting existing and potential public water supply systems.</li> <li>b. Work with local governments to update watershed protection requirements for surface water sources under Public Health Law.</li> <li>c. Ensure safe and adequate drinking water resources by protecting aquifers, aquifer recharge areas, and well heads by encouraging towns to create an overlay district that regulates development over aquifers and recharge areas.</li> <li>d. Encourage municipalities to include priority growth areas in their comprehensive plans using factors such as municipal water and sewer areas, and their potential for extension, transportation crossroads, existing patterns of development, and absence of critical open space resources.</li> </ul>



*“Going North on the Hudson” by Claudia Engel, Port Ewen.*

*“Rhine-cliff Bridge” by Vindora Wixom, Kingston.*





### 3. Working Landscapes

Enhance the viability and protection of working landscapes

**Need:** Ulster County has lost significant amounts of agricultural farmland since 1950, declining from 227,497 acres to 71,000 by the end of the century, representing a drop from 35% to only 10% of the total land in the county. Working landscapes are under considerable development pressure yet constitute one of the most valued resources in community quality of life surveys.

**Overarching Goal:** Enhance the viability of existing farming operations, agricultural businesses, and timber harvesting operations and encourage new ones to be formed.

**Working Landscapes Partners:**

- Ulster County Legislature
- Ulster County Planning Board
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County
- Ulster County Development Corporation
- Ulster County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
- Farming and Timber Harvesting Organizations
- Ulster County Municipalities
- Regional Organizations with Related Missions

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>1. Support plans, programs and policies that promote agricultural viability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop and promote a “Community Farms Program” to increase recognition of farming in the community.</li> <li>b. Update and implement the county’s Farmland Protection Plan.</li> <li>c. Establish ongoing links with other agricultural economic development activities in the Hudson Valley region.</li> <li>d. Coordinate with Ulster Tomorrow economic development plan’s strategy 12b to “Maintain Economic Viability of Agriculture.”</li> <li>e. Support local and county Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs.</li> </ul>

### 3. Working Landscapes, continued



Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>1. Support plans, programs and policies that promote agricultural viability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Examine alternative funding sources and financing structures for purchase of development rights programs including the use of innovative program structures, such as installment purchase agreements, transfer of development rights and others.</li> <li>g. Implement the Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation Plan (UCSWCD).</li> <li>h. Develop policies regarding inclusion of prime agricultural lands within agricultural districts.</li> <li>i. Develop conservation subdivision standards that allow farmers an economic return on their lands while preserving key areas of the farm for agricultural use.</li> <li>j. Develop policies that address property taxes for strictly agricultural land, or tax relief for rented lands.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Develop and promote use of planning tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Link planning of regional infrastructure that impacts the agricultural sector. Encourage infrastructure development within identified growth areas as a means to avoid growth on important agricultural lands.</li> <li>b. Encourage local governments to consider Transfer of Development Rights programs and explore a regional program with administrative support provided by the county.</li> <li>c. Create a model for agricultural zoning to enable towns that would like to protect working landscapes another means to do so.</li> <li>d. Continue to work with municipalities on agricultural districts to clarify the activities of the agricultural districts programs.</li> <li>e. Support the requirement of buffers and other site design measures as strategies for reducing farmer/non-farm neighbor conflicts.</li> </ul>



## 4. Landforms and Natural Features

Protect the County’s valuable landforms and natural features

**Need:** Significant landforms and natural features may be threatened by inappropriate development that can mar the visual or ecological values of these places. Inclusion of these features and their values in comprehensive planning and zoning would assist municipalities in their protection.

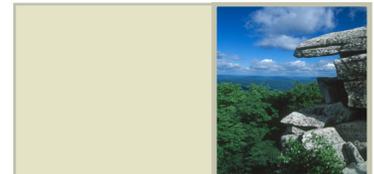
**Overarching Goal:** Develop a systems approach to managing the natural resources in relationship to the landforms in which they occur and preserve the unique natural features within each.

### Landforms and Natural Features Partners:

- Ulster County Legislature
- Ulster County Planning Board
- Ulster County Transportation Council
- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- Ulster County Municipalities
- Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Regional Organizations with Related Missions
- New York State Department of State and Office for Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- National Parks Service

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>1. Identify distinctive, unique and significant county and local level landforms that require protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop methods and policies for landform conservation/development and encourage their adoption at the local level, including model ordinances and overlay district approaches.</li> <li>b. Study additional scenic byway designations such as Route 28 in the Catskill Park, Route 212 from Saugerties to Mount Tremper, Route 52 from Ellenville to Liberty, and many more.</li> <li>c. For Route 28, support the development of corridor guidelines for scenic and natural resource protection through an intermunicipal process to help guide local decision making and participation in protecting the corridor as the gateway to the Catskill Park</li> <li>d. Consider designation of significant landform types under Federal programs such as the National Natural Landmarks as well as local criteria-based designation programs.</li> </ul>

## 4. Landforms and Natural Features, continued



Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>2. Coordinate local and regional plans for landform and natural feature protection</p>	<p>a. Coordinate open space plan goals and actions with the Shawangunk Scenic Byway, the River Road Scenic Byway in Esopus, and the Ulster County Long Range Transportation Plan.</p> <p>b. Encourage river front communities to adopt Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans and work with those with plans to implement them addressing issues such as scale, community character, viewsheds, design guidelines, and provisions for open space, recreation, and waterfront access.</p>
<p>3. Develop visualization and policies for Conservation and Landscape Character Areas in the county</p>	<p>a. Develop policy guidelines for conservation and landscape character areas in the county using mapping data on landforms such as valleys, ridgelines, slopes, coastal areas, and scenic areas as a base.</p>



*“The High Peterskill” (above) and “Walking in the Gunks” (right) by Thomas Stratton, High Falls.*





## 5. Ecological Communities

Develop priority biodiversity areas and ensure that land use decisions incorporate habitat protection and species diversity

**Need:** Resource areas such as watersheds and working landscapes are interconnected systems that provide protection and corridors for ecological communities. Understanding how these interconnections operate and differentiating between ecological communities is also needed.

**Overarching Goal:** Ensure that natural resource protection and development activity is conducted to provide for intact and interconnected communities and ecosystems for habitat protection and species diversity.

### Ecological Communities Partners:

- Ulster County Legislature
- Ulster County Planning Board
- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- Ulster County Municipalities
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Regional Organizations with Related Missions
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Nonprofit Organizations Concerned with Ecological Communities

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>1. Coordinate local efforts to identify Biological Diversity Areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Continue identification of Priority Biological Diversity Areas and corridors linking these areas using the NRI and partnering with other organizations to augment efforts.</li> <li>b. Coordinate inventory with the New York State Natural Heritage Program inventory and ranking system for determining priorities and utilize its inventory form for gathering local data.</li> <li>c. Encourage State agencies to seek designation of sites under their control as Natural Heritage Areas.</li> <li>d. Encourage communities to conduct local biodiversity assessments and that they consider requiring them for the development process.</li> <li>e. Increase biological research where sufficient research has not taken place or where more research is needed in order to better assess biological conservation needs, determine core biodiversity areas, and important corridors between them.</li> </ul>

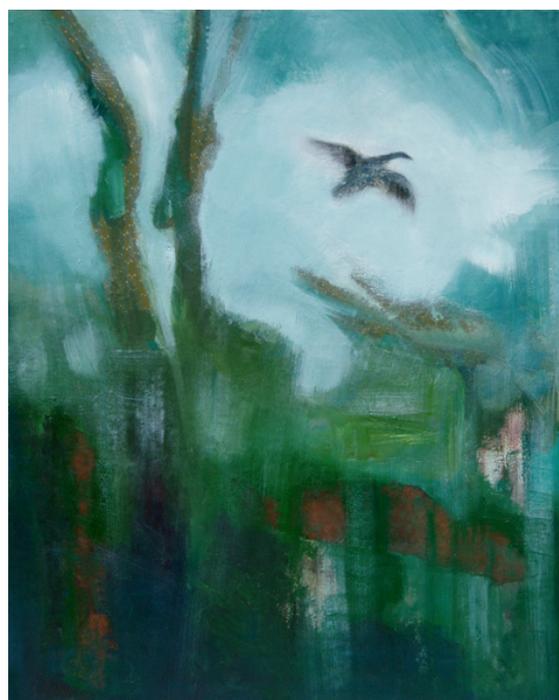
## 5. Ecological Communities, continued



Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>2. Support ongoing efforts to increase inclusion of biodiversity identification in land use planning</p>	<p>a. Encourage communities to include Biologically-sensitive land use in their decisions by utilizing biodiversity assessments for land use decisions, and providing education, technical assistance, model language for local planning, guidelines, standards for NRIs, and Best Management Practices/Best Development Practices.</p> <p>b. Foster linkages between Core Biological Diversity Areas by encouraging municipalities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide developers guidance on conservation issues,</li> <li>• Direct resource protection funds and other tools toward land within identified areas, and</li> <li>• Work with neighboring municipalities to coordinate efforts.</li> </ul> <p>c. Encourage land use decision-makers to attend biodiversity training.</p>
<p>3. Protect key habitat areas necessary to maintain ecological communities</p>	<p>a. Promote policies and practices that sustain farms and agricultural and forestry practices that are known to contribute to the County's biological diversity.</p> <p>b. Support and utilize programs that preserve key habitat areas such as USDA Forest Legacy Program.</p> <p>c. Utilize the USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll farmland to protect wildlife.</p> <p>d. Promote policies and practices that prevent/control invasive species.</p>



*“Autumn Sounds”* (above) by Thomas Stratton, *High Falls* and *“Bird over Onteora Lake”* (right) by Emily Thing, *Lake Katrine*.





## 6. Historic and Cultural Resources

Promote stewardship of historic and cultural resources

**Need:** Cultural and historic resources add to quality of life, a “sense of place” and are resources for tourism, education, and economic development. They are often threatened by incompatible development, a lack of protective statutes and guidelines in communities, a lack of awareness of their significance, value and potential, a lack of funds for their protection, and poor management. Regional “stewardship” is required to protect the value of cultural and historic structures, sites and districts and their context in Ulster County, including combinations of cultural landscapes and open space resources. The network of cultural heritage and cultural landscapes should be seen as part of the region’s overall landscape of significant places.

**Overarching Goal:** Support stewardship of cultural and historic resources through inventory, access to preservation tools and resources, and increased understanding of their contribution to the “cultural landscapes” of Ulster County.

### Historic and Cultural Resources Partners:

- Ulster County Legislature
- Ulster County Planning Board
- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- New York State Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Ulster County Heritage and Cultural Nonprofits
- Regional Organizations with Related Missions
- Chambers of Commerce
- Ulster County Municipalities

*This penny postcard depicts Wall Street in the Uptown Kingston Stockade District looking south towards the spire of the Old Dutch Church. The Stockade District and many of the buildings within it are on the National Register of Historic Places.*



## 6. Historic and Cultural Resources, continued



Goals	Recommended Actions
<p>1. Support stewardship through identification, coordinated inventory, and integrated management of cultural and historic resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Recognize historic properties by improving the inventory of sites, access to identification and recognition programs, access to information on historic properties, and by highlighting diversity of historic properties.</li> <li>b. Viewsheds and scenic vistas that characterize the county, including historic sites and farm buildings, as well as historic centers, should be identified among Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Growth Areas to preserve a sense of place.</li> <li>c. Support the contextual integration of new development in historic districts as a part of planning in and around Priority Growth Areas.</li> <li>d. Conserve and enhance the landscape associated with historic and scenic corridors, including highways, rural roads and the waterways.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Support local cultural and historic preservation activities</p>	<p>Support for cultural and historic preservation activities should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Preservation of historic sites, districts, and landscapes that reflect Ulster County's heritage;</li> <li>b. Incorporation of preservation into planning and revitalization;</li> <li>c. Protection of working farms as a part of Ulster County's heritage;</li> <li>d. Expansion of resource identification activities in communities;</li> <li>e. Improvement of local preservation awareness and education;</li> <li>f. Improved access to preservation information; and</li> <li>g. Collaboration with Ulster County Tourism office, chambers of commerce and others to promote heritage tourism.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Educate public, decision-makers, and property owners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Improve access to and distribution of preservation information to local communities;</li> <li>b. Strengthen local, regional, and statewide partnerships to increase awareness and encourage local revitalization activities;</li> <li>c. Reach out to involved individuals and institutions to develop education programs and target younger audience.</li> </ul>



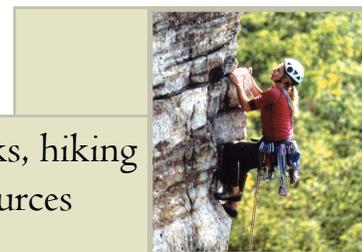
## 6. Historic and Cultural Resources, continued

Goals	Recommended Actions
4. Link preservation to planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Raise awareness of economic benefits of historic preservation through educational materials.</li> <li>b. Offer training and education and improving communication and working relationships for stakeholder groups.</li> <li>c. Continue to develop county’s support for the local capacity to implement “Main Streets” programs through the Ulster County Planning Board’s Main Street Program.</li> </ul>
5. Utilize preservation as catalyst for revitalization and tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Highlight successful revitalization efforts.</li> <li>b. Support coordination of tourism strategies involving heritage.</li> <li>c. Identify visitor statistics for public and private support for preservation investments and programs.</li> </ul>
6. Improve protection and treatment during project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Evaluate preservation environmental review processes.</li> <li>b. Improve management of preservation environmental review information.</li> </ul>
7. Promote awareness of archeological heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increase archeological identification, recognition, and preservation efforts.</li> <li>b. Improve effectiveness of archeological environmental reviews.</li> <li>c. Improve content and access to archeological information.</li> </ul>



*“Saugerties Lighthouse” by Staats Fasoldt, Rosendale. The Saugerties Lighthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.*

## 7. Recreational Resources



Create, preserve, enhance and provide managed access to parks, hiking trails, active and passive recreation facilities, and historic resources

**Need:** There are over 250 recreational sites throughout Ulster County, including local, county, state and federal, as well as nonprofit, private and commercial sites. Many require significant repairs and upgrades to meet the current and projected future demand. The greatest need in Ulster County is for swimming facilities.

**Overarching Goal:** Improve recreational opportunities throughout the county. Create better links between communities, trails, transportation, and tourism.

### Recreational Resources Partners:

- Ulster County Legislature
- Ulster County Planning Board
- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Other relevant county departments including UCAT, Tourism, and Public Works
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- New York State Hudson River Valley Greenway and regional entities with related missions
- Ulster County School Districts
- Nonprofit organizations concerned with parks, trails and recreation.
- Ulster County Municipalities

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p><b>1. Plan for and create additional recreational opportunities</b></p>	<p>a. Create a county parks site/facility management plan, program and manual and expand county park holdings based on recreation plan (goal 1g below).</p> <p>b. Work with school districts to arrange greater public access to school recreational facilities.</p> <p>c. Working with partners, create a spatially connected system of open space/recreation/historic sites that connects trails, park lands, and other recreational areas with and through towns, cities, and villages. Priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking the Shawangunk Ridge and the Catskill Park lands.</li> <li>• Completing rail trails throughout the county so there are no gaps</li> <li>• For the Catskill Forest Preserve, support linkages of rail trail and non-motorized facilities with the existing state trail network and an active recreation network for the Bluestone Wild Forest.</li> </ul>



## 7. Recreational Resources, continued

Goals	Recommended Actions
<p><b>1. Plan for and create additional recreational opportunities</b></p>	<p>d. Connect built places and communities with open spaces, including rail trails, greenways, town/county parks, historic sites, state lands, and beyond. Encourage these connections at the local level through marked, dedicated bike-lanes, hike/bike trails, clear signage and information.</p> <p>e. Produce a detailed recreation study, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and inventory of needs and gaps (compare with SCORP index).</li> <li>• Detailed mapping of recreational resources – state lands, trails, county/city/town/village parks, rail trails, fishing access, etc.</li> <li>• Recommendations for improvements to existing resources and ways to increase access to swimming facilities and meet other identified needs/gaps in recreational facilities to meet the projected demand.</li> <li>• Develop cooperatively a regional park in southwestern Ulster County.</li> <li>• Monitor potential to purchase property on one of the Binnewater Lakes as proposed in the 1972 County Open Space and Parks Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Promote and enhance greater access to existing recreational resources</b></p>	<p>a. Utilize existing resources, including rights-of-ways (ROWs) where bridges and highways cross streams, for fishing and boat access.</p> <p>b. Support multimodal transportation access to parks, beginning with areas of greatest need (e.g., Ulster County-New Paltz Pool, Minnewaska Lake). Coordinate this recommendation with the UCTC plans, UCAT, City Bus and private carriers.</p> <p>c. Support the development of educational/interpretive centers, including Ulster Landing Park and the Catskill Park Visitor Information Center.</p> <p>d. Where feasible, develop county-owned land for recreation and access purposes, including the county land at the Kingston/Ulster traffic circle.</p> <p>e. Coordinate plans with Ulster County Tourism Department to develop and implement “eco-tourism” and heritage tourism plans.</p> <p>f. Develop a policy and procedure on the disposal of county lands, including lands acquired for tax delinquencies that are identified for protection based on the resource areas in this plan. (See item 4a under Protected Open Space, above.)</p> <p>g. Play a role in the enforcement of rules associated with trails (e.g., ATVs)</p> <p>h. Support ADA accessibility to recreational facilities.</p> <p>i. Maps: Develop maps of county-owned properties and other public rights of way, utility rights of way, linear corridors.</p> <p>j. Create a web presence for recreation.</p>

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Please note: Due to their volume, Appendices are not included in this printing of the plan. They will be available as part of the plan's website at: [www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/ospace.shtml](http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/ospace.shtml)

Map Book  
CD Affixed  
to Hard Copy

For more information about the plan, visit the website or contact the Ulster County Planning Board at (845)340-3340 or [planning@co.ulster.ny.us](mailto:planning@co.ulster.ny.us).

“Here the works of man dwindle, in the heart of the southern Catskills.”  
— John Burroughs



*“Golden Light on the Esopus Creek” (oil on panel) by Jane Bloodgood-Abrams, Kingston. Her work is inspired by the Hudson River School of American landscape painters and other artistic traditions of the Hudson Valley.*

This plan contains the ideas and artwork of community members, artists and photographers of Ulster County whose efforts and talent contribute to the protection of its magnificent landscape.