

Partners Conserve 149 Scenic and Historic Acres along Catskill Creek

Deal also supports local efforts to mitigate flooding impacts

TOWN OF CATSKILL (GREENE COUNTY)—Scenic Hudson, in collaboration with the Greene Land Trust, has protected 149 scenic and historic acres along Catskill Creek that offer exciting new opportunities for outdoor recreation and will help the community mitigate flooding. The acquisition marks another victory in Scenic Hudson’s campaign to Save the Land That Matters Most. The Greene Land Trust will play a leading role in managing the land for public use.

Located just upstream of the Village of Catskill, the property encompasses more than two miles of shoreline on Catskill Creek, a major Hudson River tributary. It contains an open floodplain meadow along the creek’s eastern bank, upland forest overlooking the meadow and a forested area west of the creek. Considering its proximity to the village, the land is remarkably unspoiled, as evidenced by its similarity to 19th-century paintings of the site by Frederic Church and Thomas Cole. The property also features a portion of the railbed of the historic Catskill Mountain Railway, which carried passengers between the Hudson River and mountaintop hostelrys like the Catskill Mountain House.

Scenic Hudson acquired 144 acres. A neighboring landowner donated a conservation easement on five adjacent acres to the Green Land Trust, which also will assume management responsibility for the remainder of the land. Plans for the property include establishing marked walking paths that will connect visitors to the meadow and the creek’s shoreline.

The entire property is located within the Catskill Creek Subunit of the state-designated Catskill-Olana Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (SASS). According to the SASS description, the subunit’s “dramatic natural settings,” “wilderness character” and “undisturbed state” so close to a population center make it a rarity along the Hudson River estuary.

Land will help mitigate flooding impacts downstream

In addition to offering great potential for outdoor recreation—including walking, fishing and nature study—the land will support efforts by the Village of Catskill to carry out strategies outlined in a 2014 report drafted by the Catskill Waterfront Resiliency Task Force, initiated by Scenic Hudson and partners, to prepare for flooding and other climate-related impacts. Specifically, the report recommended a holistic approach for managing the Catskill Creek watershed to reduce flood risks. Were the newly protected property to be developed, landowners might harden and raise the shoreline to protect their investments, increasing the likelihood of flooding downstream.

“Protecting this beautiful and historic land along Catskill Creek will provide many benefits to the community—supporting the local tourism economy as well as helping to safeguard homes and businesses in the village from the devastating flooding they experienced during past mega-storms. We were delighted to partner with the Greene Land Trust to conserve this ‘must-save’ property,” said Scenic Hudson Senior Vice President Steve Rosenberg.

“Whether you want to get out and hike, fish, study nature, or simply observe the scenery that has changed little since the Hudson River School painters made it famous more than 150 years ago - this land offers it all. We are fortunate to be able protect this and other special places that contribute so much to the quality of life we enjoy in our communities” said Greene Land Trust President Bob Knighton. “Greene Land Trust is excited to work with Scenic Hudson to protect and manage this land for current residents and visitors to enjoy and to help make sure it is there for the benefit of future generations.”

Scenic Hudson Land Conservation Director Seth McKee negotiated the transaction along with Greene Land Trust President Bob Knighton. Funds for the acquisition came from Scenic Hudson's Lila Acheson and DeWitt Wallace Hudson Valley Land Preservation Endowment.

In 2003 Scenic Hudson played a leading role in preventing demolition of three 19th-century buildings on Catskill's historic Main Street, aiding the village's downtown revitalization. And with Audubon New York, Scenic Hudson owns and co-manages the 480-acre RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary in the town and village. The preserve offers two miles of trails and access for paddler to RamsHorn Marsh, one of the Hudson River's largest freshwater tidal swamp forests.

Land preservation boosts economic opportunity

Scenic Hudson pursues its campaign to Save the Land That Matters Most realizing that preserving land provides the cornerstone of a sustainable Hudson Valley economy. Tourism in the 10-county region sustains more than 83,000 jobs. Annual tourism spending in Greene County is \$154.7 million and supports nearly 3,200 jobs. Protected lands also help grow other parts of the economy. A study by the Trust for Public Land notes that executives looking to relocate or start firms rank quality of life—including an abundance of parks and open space—higher than housing, cost of living and good schools.

Preserved land saves tax dollars, improves human health

The U.S. Forest Service calculated in 2011 that over a 50-year lifetime one tree provides \$62,000 worth of air pollution control and recycles \$37,500 worth of water. Green infrastructure and open space conservation are often the cheapest way to safeguard drinking water, clean the air and achieve other environmental goals. Forested lands control erosion, absorb carbon dioxide and other harmful greenhouse gasses, and help shelter our houses from heat and wind. Wetlands serve as wildlife habitat, absorb storm and flood water and reduce pollutant loads in watershed runoff.

Protecting open space also offers myriad human health benefits. Trees sequester pollutants that contribute to asthma, lung cancer, and cardiovascular disease, while releasing oxygen. In addition to helping keep drinking water clean and avoid flooding, conserved land maintains biodiversity, which plays an important role in preventing diseases such as West Nile virus and Lyme disease.

Collaborative campaign targets protecting valley's most important landscapes

Scenic Hudson's campaign to Save the Land That Matters Most is a multi-year, collaborative effort with fellow land trusts, governments, individuals and businesses to protect lands of the highest scenic, ecological and agricultural significance throughout the Hudson Valley. Since initiating the campaign in 2007, Scenic Hudson has conserved 14,257 acres and our land trust partners an additional 2,669 acres.

About Scenic Hudson

Scenic Hudson works to protect and restore the Hudson River and its majestic landscape as an irreplaceable national treasure and a vital resource for residents and visitors. A crusader for the valley since 1963, we are credited with saving fabled Storm King Mountain from a destructive industrial project and launching the modern grass-roots environmental movement. Today with more than 25,000 ardent supporters, we are the largest environmental group focused on the Hudson River Valley. Our team of experts combines land acquisition, support for agriculture, citizen-based advocacy and sophisticated planning tools to create environmentally healthy communities, champion smart economic growth, open up riverfronts to the public and preserve the valley's inspiring beauty and natural resources. To date Scenic Hudson has created or enhanced more than 65 parks, preserves and historic sites up and down the Hudson River and conserved over 35,000 acres. www.scenichudson.org

Greene Land Trust is dedicated to protecting the many places that make Greene County special. Scenic vistas that inspired the Hudson River School of painters and have attracted visitors to our mountains and

valleys for generations; agricultural lands and family farms that are an essential part of our heritage and economy; and open spaces that provide habitat for an abundance of wild creatures and an array of recreation opportunities for current and future generations. Greene Land Trust believes that these things are an important part of the quality of life we enjoy in Greene County and deserve our concern and care. We work with a variety of partners to help create a balance between the sound development that our communities need and conservation of the resources and places that make our communities such a great place to live.