

## **GREENE COUNTY GRASSLAND PLAN ADOPTED**

(Coxsackie, NY) The Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, Greene County Industrial Development Agency, and Greene Land Trust have adopted the Greene County Grassland Habitat Management Plan, which was completed this summer after 10 years of cooperative effort among local and state agencies, developers, non-profit organizations, and concerned citizens. By adopting the plan, the boards of directors have committed to supporting the plan's goals to conserve critical habitat for threatened and endangered grassland birds and maintain rural character, farmland, and quality of life for future generations in eastern Greene County.

“The Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District initiated work on the Grassland Plan in 2004 with a grant from the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program. At that time, rapid development in the 9W corridor revealed a need for a comprehensive plan addressing the conservation of critical grassland and wetland resources,” stated Jeff Flack, the District's Executive Director. “The Grassland Plan is a proactive step to insure the maximum benefit from future habitat protection and mitigation activities.” In developing the plan, volunteers mapped almost 30,000 acres of habitat and conducted five years of winter raptor surveys.

The Greene County Industrial Development Agency was a key partner from the start. “The Grassland Plan lays out win-win opportunities for accommodating conservation and economic growth,” according to René Van Schaack, Executive Director. “The IDA has already demonstrated that, with knowledge and intelligent design, industrial development can co-exist with good environmental benefits.”

Bob Knighton, President of the Greene Land Trust, called the Grassland Plan “a ‘road map’ to help us preserve and protect Greene County's rural landscapes and grassland birds. The process of developing the plan has already resulted in the protection of grassland, wetland, and streamside habitats and has led to increased education and awareness about scarce resources.”

Strong partnerships and cooperation will be necessary for the plan to succeed. Greene Land Trust has already developed materials for landowners with grassland habitat who want to learn more about grassland management and can provide places for grassland flora and fauna to flourish. The Grassland Plan also calls on local governments to recognize their essential role in determining the future of local grasslands and other natural resources. A workshop will be held on November 5<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm at the IDA office in Coxsackie to train land use decision-makers and the interested public in how the Grassland Plan can inform land use policy, planning, and project reviews. Contact Ingrid Haeckel, Hudson River Estuary Conservation and Land Use Specialist, for more information or to register at (518) 402-8954.

The Grassland Habitat Management Plan is available on the Greene Land Trust website at [www.greenelandtrust.org](http://www.greenelandtrust.org).