



SPRING UPDATE

APRIL 2007

Saratoga P.L.A.N. (Preserving Land and Nature)
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Project Updates - Land Protection

Round Lake Preserve

In Spring 2006, Saratoga P.L.A.N. was contacted by a landowner looking to sell his 90+ acres of wetlands, riparian buffer and agricultural lands along the Anthony Kill and Round Lake in the Town of Malta. Protection of the Anthony Kill has long been a priority for Saratoga P.L.A.N., as it has been identified for preservation in numerous local, county, and state preservation plans, as well as listed in our Special Places Stewardship Plan. Upon review of the site – less than one mile from the future Luther Forest Technology Park – the property quickly became our highest priority for protection.

The site protects important wetlands and riparian buffers which help maintain natural flood control of the Anthony Kill. In addition, it is home to an active Great blue heron rookery, a state endangered native plant, and archaeological resources of national significance. Saratoga P.L.A.N. has been actively seeking funding to protect this site, which is in immediate threat of development. To date, we have received a \$350,000 grant from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund, a \$100,000 grant from Saratoga County's Farmland and



Future Round Lake Preserve, photo by Josh Gerritsen

Open Space Preservation Program, and have received preliminary approval of a major funding request to the Town of Malta. This site offers opportunities for public access to Round Lake, which is currently severely restricted, as well as future opportunities for kayaking, hiking, skiing, and other outdoor activities and environmental education.

Blanding's Turtle Project



photo by Kenneth Barnett

The discovery of a population of the state threatened Blanding's Turtle in the Town of Wilton has prompted the formation of a conservation collaboration project between Saratoga P.L.A.N., the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park (WWPP), and SUNY Albany's Biodiversity, Conservation and Policy Program. The Blanding's Turtle resides in only two other regions in New York State (Dutchess County and the Great Lakes vicinity.) Such a rare discovery warranted further research into the turtle's population and habitat use. Saratoga P.L.A.N. and WWPP have contracted with a SUNY graduate student, Andrea Chaloux, to survey and collect data on the population, distribution, and habitat use of the turtle in and near the WWPP. This two-year study will inform us about the unique breeding, nesting and foraging habitat of this rare species, so we can contribute to future habitat conservation for this species.

DesRoches Property & Community Initiative Appeal

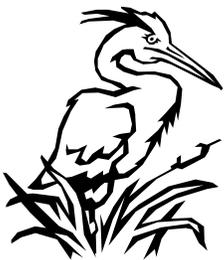
An update from Marsha Boelio, Saratoga PLAN Board member and Galway Open Space Committee member.

As a board member of Saratoga P.L.A.N. and a Galway proponent of open spaces, I'd like to give you an update on the DesRoches property on Crane Road. First a bit of background: in 1996 Mr. DesRoches took measures to protect his 48-acres of forests and ponds by bequeathing his property (formerly the Galway Tree Farm) to the Saratoga County Land Conservancy (Saratoga P.L.A.N.'s predecessor.) His wish was to protect the land and leave it in a "forever wild" state. Saratoga P.L.A.N. received title to the property in 2005. The structures on the property, which had suffered years of neglect and water damage, are deemed to be a safety hazard and will need to be demolished.

Although operating on a very lean budget, Saratoga P.L.A.N. has decided to take on the financial responsibility for the work of preparing the property for public access. It has received numerous in-kind donations of services to evaluate and plan the demolition. Yet, the tab for the demolition work is running in excess of \$40,000. The expenses include: site assessments, legal review of bequest, demolition strategy and responsible removal of all materials, and comprehensive asbestos evaluation and recommended abatement and removal. Volunteers spent the better part of a day earlier this winter gathering household waste on the property (mercury, paints, solvents, adhesives, etc.) for safe disposal.

Between now and June of this year, Saratoga P.L.A.N. seeks to secure funding for: asbestos removal, demolition and removal of all structures, filling the septic tank, the well and other depressions, grading the site and preparing it for capital improvements for public access.

In February of this year Saratoga P.L.A.N. submitted a grant request to Assemblyman James Tedisco, seeking help to fund the abovementioned tasks.



Galway Nature Preserve
(former Galway Tree Farm)

48 acres of ponds & forests



DesRoches house with fallen tree on it!

In the meantime, here's what Galway neighbors and friends can do to help:

- Call Assemblyman Tedisco at 370-2812 or 455-3751 to encourage him to say yes to the proposal
- Join as a member of Saratoga P.L.A.N. (www.saratogaplan.org)
- Make a special donation to the DesRoches Preserve Fund
- Help us brainstorm as to how best to fund the ongoing work as a community (e.g. fundraising BBQ this summer on the site)
- Pass on this information to all of your friends who aren't members of Saratoga P.L.A.N.

Before long, we will all enjoy the first publicly accessible nature preserve in the Town of Galway – one which will include parking, and trails for local residents and visitors to enjoy the diverse habitats and wildlife found on the site. Our town will enjoy this treasure when the job's completed. Please join this exciting community initiative...thanks!

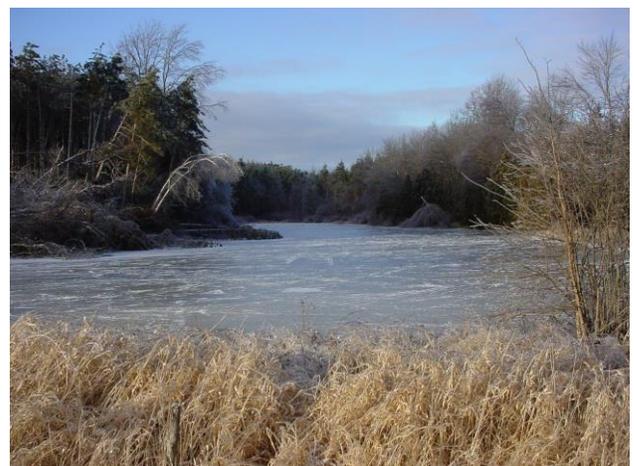


photo by Josh Gerrisen

Ritson Farm

We are very close to completion of a farmland conservation easement and transfer of development rights on a 35-acre farm in the Town of Saratoga. Lifetime farmer Charlie Ritson is selling his development rights on the property so it will remain protected as agricultural lands into perpetuity. We are deeply grateful for Mr. Ritson's commitment to protect his farm, which will link other protected land near the Saratoga National Battlefield and the National Cemetery. His dedication and spirit is a shining example of the kind of individual contribution required to protect the farmland and open spaces which we so highly value and which contribute so greatly to our County's quality of life.



photo by Josh Gerritsen

The Ritson Farm is located in the Saratoga County 'Farmland Core Area' identified as a priority in the County's Green Infrastructure Plan. Saratoga P.L.A.N. applied for and received a \$61,133 grant from Saratoga County's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. We have also received a \$50,000 commitment toward the project from the Open Space Institute, a private conservation organization working to preserve the landscape of the Hudson River Valley. And thanks to the generosity of one of our members, we have received an important contribution toward the transaction expenses and the stewardship endowment needed for this project. Currently the farm is leased to a local dairy farmer, whose adjacent land was also protected through a grant from the County's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program.

Trails Advocacy & Leadership Update



Saratoga P.L.A.N. formed a trail committee in 2004 to engage the interests of trail advocates and users of the Mid County (Zim Smith) Trail which traverses five towns and two villages in the densest urban area. As a result of our advocacy efforts, Saratoga County will begin construction of the southern portion of the trail this spring on the section from the Village of Round Lake south to Coons Crossing in Halfmoon. As interest has grown in a countywide trail network our committee has expanded to include equine, snowmobile and biking enthusiasts. Using this trail as the spine - trails are now being proposed to reach Clifton Park's trail system, as well connecting the Zim Smith and Saratoga PLAN's Malta Trolley line to the proposed Luther Forest trails and into the Town of Stillwater and the Saratoga National Battlefield. Other projects envision a Champlain Canal trail from Waterford to Moreau as well as a trail to the Spruce Mountain Fire Tower in Corinth. To join our group or learn more – email Julie Stokes at Julie@saratogaplan.org

Photo by Stock Studios Photography

Bird Research at Bog Meadowbrook Nature Preserve

This spring biologists from Skidmore College and the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee will be studying common yellowthroats at the Bog Meadowbrook Nature Preserve as part of a larger research project examining this small warbler's breeding ecology. The scientists selected Bog Meadowbrook preserve specifically because they needed a study population living in a natural and relatively undisturbed wetland habitat. This project serves as a testament to one of the many benefits of protecting our region's open spaces and natural areas. We welcome the researchers and will keep you posted on opportunities to assist with the sampling.

Project Updates – Community Planning

Green Infrastructure Workshops

As the lead advocate for Saratoga County's recently completed Green Infrastructure Plan, we are now shifting our focus to implementation of the plan. We are committed to providing community planning services to the county, municipalities, and landowners to assist in the implementation of the Green Infrastructure Plan. *In the coming months we will be planning four workshops in town, city and village halls throughout the county to highlight the recommendations of the county plan most relevant to that municipality and develop community consensus on priority projects.* Check the following website for a copy of the plan, [//www.behanplanning.com/bpfiles/SCGIP.html](http://www.behanplanning.com/bpfiles/SCGIP.html).



Board Member Brad Oswald participates in a Green Infrastructure Public Planning session. Photo by Behan Planning Associates, LLC.

Once the workshops are complete, our priorities include: 1) helping communities identify funding programs to advance their priorities, 2) promoting the Saratoga County Farmland and Open Space Protection Program, and assisting communities in identifying high priority projects and in preparing applications, and 3) helping communities identify and secure matching funding for those projects. We intend to coordinate closely with the Saratoga County Planning Department and the county's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee, and local open space committees to identify speakers and topics for the workshops, as well as to coordinate community-funding applications closely with ongoing County priorities. Please watch for further information about these upcoming workshops.

Old Saratoga On the Hudson

American Battlefield Protection Program

Phase one of the Battles of Saratoga Preservation Plan and Viewshed Protection Plan has been completed by Dodson Associates, the project consultant, including the battle viewshed analysis, historic resources and ranking, and image poll. Saratoga P.L.A.N.'s Diane Metz is now writing the preservation plan, which will include tools local municipalities in the Old Saratoga on the Hudson region can use to implement these plans. The purpose of these plans is to preserve sites important to the Battle of Saratoga and the view from those sites. One of the most extraordinary aspects of the Saratoga Battlefield and viewshed is that they remain relatively unchanged since the time of the battle, over 200 years ago. Much of the land was agricultural then, and continues to be so now. Other famous battles sites in the U.S. are not so fortunate, such as Gettysburg, where the battlefield is preserved but the surrounding lands and original viewshed have been lost to intensive development. Even some of the original travelways

used at the time of the historic turning point battle remain intact and in use to this day – including the familiar River Road and Route 4. The project is funded by a grant from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program.



Saratoga Battlefield Viewshed

Champlain Canal Towpath Trail & Fish Creek Trail

One last hurdle remains before construction can begin on the Champlain Canal Towpath trail, which will connect Route 29 in Schuylerville north to Lock 5 Island. A big thank you goes out to the NYS Canal Corporation for their work on the trail design and engineering plans, as well as resolution of several title issues - all recently completed. The next step is an archaeological survey and research - once this is completed construction of the trail can begin. In addition to the Champlain Canal Towpath, Schuylerville will soon be getting another trail thanks to a \$65,000 member item allocation from Senator Joseph Bruno. The funding will be used to create a walking trail from the Schuyler House up to the Village of Victory following Fish Creek.

~~~~~ Community Partner Updates ~~~~~

To advance regional planning and smart growth, Saratoga P.L.A.N. provides planning assistance to local governments to fund, develop and implement comprehensive and open space plans. For example, Saratoga P.L.A.N. led the development of the 2002 Open Space Plan for the City of Saratoga Springs and managed the development and passage of a \$5 million bonding program for open space acquisitions. We secured funding for the Towns of Saratoga and Northumberland to prepare a joint Open Space Plan in 2005 and are coordinating numerous planning, parks, and trail development projects under the Old Saratoga on the Hudson regional community development project.

In 2006, we formed partnerships with the Towns of Malta and Saratoga to help the towns advance specific

projects. In Malta, we are working closely with the Town on the creation of a new 90-acre nature preserve and public access area for Round Lake, development of a multi-use trail system, and preservation of other important ecological areas like Manning Cove on Saratoga Lake.

In Saratoga, we are advancing numerous projects in the Town including the development of the Champlain Canal Trail, projects to preserve farmland through the purchase of development rights, and an American Battlefield Preservation Plan to identify and preserve important historic resources and views in the vicinity of Saratoga National Historic Park.

A big thanks to the Towns of Malta and Saratoga for joining us as Community Partners!

Save the Date for these Upcoming Events

Celebration for Conservation

Thursday July 12, 2007

6 – 8pm

Saratoga National Golf Course

Tickets: \$40/person



Guest Speaker, Stephen Small, recognized by Forbes magazine as the nation's top authority on saving land and money through conservation easements.

Mr. Small advises landowners on federal income and estate tax planning to help preserve valued family land, including planning for the next generation of ownership. He has worked with private landowners around the country to preserve a wide range of property, from small family parcels, timberland, and dairy farms, to western ranches, Atlantic coast barrier islands, farmland, and wildlife habitat.

Feast of the Fields

Thursday September 20, 2007

6 – 9 pm

Saratoga Polo

Tickets: \$150/person



Feast of the Fields Host Chef David Britton prepares his entree using eggs from Thomas Poultry Farm in Schuylerville.

photos by Niki Rossi Photography



Guests enjoy the food & festivities at last year's *Feast*.



This painting of the Carver Farm, by local artist Rumara Jewett, will be auctioned to benefit this year's *Feast*.

Martha Carver has permanently preserved her 134-acre farm in the Town of Greenfield through a generous donation of a conservation easement to Saratoga P.L.A.N. ~ the painting captures the wonderful image of this farm and our

efforts to protect farmland in the region.

(Fine-art reproduction by Michael Morrison)

Contact us for information on how to become a corporate or small business sponsor.



Ways to Give to Saratoga P.L.A.N.



Thank you to all who have supported Saratoga P.L.A.N. in the past. Your support allows us to continue our work protecting Saratoga County's beautiful open spaces and advocating for local and regional smart growth planning. Please consider participating in one of the many ways to give to Saratoga P.L.A.N. listed below – *your support really does make a difference.*

Take Advantage of 2007 IRA Tax Incentives by Donating to PLAN

If you are 70 ½ years or older with an IRA holding, you can now save on the taxable portion of your required IRA withdrawal by donating a portion to Saratoga P.L.A.N. – tax free. The Pension Protection Act of 2006 allows individuals to gift as much as \$100,000 – tax free – to a nonprofit charity, such as Saratoga P.L.A.N. However, this provision, known as an IRA rollover, is set to expire on December 31, 2007 so please take advantage of this opportunity. If you have any questions contact us at 587-5554 - we will help you find a tax expert who can guide you through the process.

NYS Tax Credits

If you have ever considered placing a conservation easement on your property, now is the time. New York State recently passed the first legislation in the country that offers local property tax relief to landowners who protect their land through a conservation easement. Individuals whose property is restricted by a conservation easement held by Saratoga P.L.A.N. could be eligible for an annual rebate of 25% of the property taxes paid on that land, up to \$5,000 per year.

The property taxes included in this rebate are county, town and school taxes. New York taxpayers will be able to claim this rebate when they file their state income tax returns. It is available to all owners of easement-restricted land, regardless of when the easement was created, provided that the easement was wholly or partially donated to a land trust or a governmental agency and the landowners meets other eligibility requirements. Conservation groups and landowners have long advocated for this new tax law. For more information contact Saratoga P.L.A.N. at 587-5554 or go to the Land Trust Alliance website, www.lta.org, for a comprehensive summary.

Federal Tax Credits

In addition to the new state tax credit, federal legislation was recently passed that offers a significant increase in one-time tax relief to farmers. This new legislation raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30 percent of his or her income in any year to 50 percent. It also allows qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100 percent of their income, and extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a voluntary conservation agreement from 5 to 15 years. *It is important to note that the new incentive only applies to easements donated in 2006 and 2007.* Through the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance, efforts are underway to make this change permanent. For more info go to

www.lta.org/publicpolicy/tax_incentives_updates.htm.

Saratoga PLAN Launches Legacy Endowment Program

Saratoga P.L.A.N. will soon be launching a new Legacy Endowment Program to build a longstanding endowment to fund land protection and stewardship for future generations. This program is part of a pilot endowment-building program sponsored by The Community Foundation of the Capital Region. Saratoga P.L.A.N. was selected as one of six non-profits in the Capital Region to participate in the program.

Saratoga P.L.A.N. will benefit tremendously from this opportunity to develop and execute a planned giving program of *bequests, donations, IRA rollovers, and other planned gifts*, through the support and expertise of a financial program manager, who will be dedicated to working with the six non-profits through The Community Foundation. If you are interested in learning more about this program and how you might participate please contact Alane at 587-5554, x 1.



Please look for your Spring Appeal letter soon.

Your donations provide crucial support that helps us continue to protect open space throughout Saratoga County.

Saratoga P.L.A.N. In the News.....

Assemblyman Bob Reilly Helps Clifton Park Preserve

Saratoga P.L.A.N. was awarded \$5000 from the Community Foundation for the Capital Region's Assemblyman Robert Reilly Salary Fund. Saratoga P.L.A.N. would like to thank Assemblyman Reilly for donating his salary to important area projects. These funds will be used to improve habitat for the endangered Karner blue butterfly at one of Saratoga P.L.A.N.'s nature preserves in Clifton Park. The project will forge a unique partnership between Saratoga P.L.A.N. and students and teachers at Shenendahowa High School.

The partnership involves having students assist in management projects for the Karner blue butterfly. The grounds of Shenendahowa High include an unusually dense area of the blue lupine plant, which



is a critical source of food for the Karner blue. The school grounds do not have a population of Karner blue butterflies however. Saratoga P.L.A.N.'s nature preserve has a very small population of Karner blue butterflies, but very few blue lupine plants. The students will collect blue lupine seeds from the Shendahowa grounds and plant those seeds at the Saratoga P.L.A.N. Preserve. In the process, students will learn about the Karner blue's life cycle and habitat needs and management of lands for conservation purposes. The Karner blue butterfly is an endangered species. Populations that remain in the U.S. are imperiled. This project in Saratoga County, and others like it, could contribute to the recovery of the species and its eventual removal from the endangered species list.



Assemblyman Bob Reilly (rt) presents Alane Ball Chinian, Executive Director, with a check for \$5000.

We are planning a site tour & habitat improvement work at the preserve on Wednesday, September 5, 2007 at 10 a.m. Please mark your calendars.

Volunteers Needed!

We are looking for volunteers to help us with our Saratoga P.L.A.N. booth at the upcoming Saratoga Environmental Expo, Saratoga Springs Convention Center, April 14 & 15. Volunteers are needed between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. both days. It's a great opportunity to support PLAN and attend this first ever environmental expo.

This year Saratoga P.L.A.N. is partnering with the Saratoga Farmers Market to provide volunteers to cover the market table - selling coffee, tea and market items. In exchange, we can also display Saratoga P.L.A.N. materials, especially information about the *Feast of the Fields*. We will need volunteers to cover Wednesdays from 3-6pm and Saturdays from 9-1pm, from May 2, 2007 through October 31, 2007.

Anyone interested in volunteering for either event please contact Alane at 587-5554 x1 or email at alane@saratogaplan.org.

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2007 Nature Walks Schedule

All walks will be led by Andy Fyfe, local naturalist and educator. Walks begin at 10:00 a.m., with the exception of the June 6th bird watching trip, which begins at 7:30 a.m & the July 12th walk which begins at 4:30 pm. Participation is free for Saratoga P.L.A.N. members, \$5 for non-members, and \$10 for families. Please call our office for directions and to register for the walks. Open to all school groups, just please call ahead.

- Wednesday April 4: DesRoches Wildlife Sanctuary, Galway
- Wednesday May 2: Kayderosseras Creek Preserve, Milton
- Saturday May 19: Alder Creek (waterfalls), Providence and Greenfield
- Wednesday June 6: 7:30 am Bird watching at Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail & Saratoga P.L.A.N.'s newest nature Preserve: Meadowbrook Nature Preserve, Saratoga Springs
- Saturday June 23: Ballston Creek Preserve, Ballston, includes viewing of a heron rookery
- Thursday, July 12: Saratoga National Golf Course Nature Trail, Saratoga Springs - precedes our Annual Meeting held at the Golf Course. Hike begins at 4:30.
- Saturday July 28: Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail & Meadowbrook Preserve, Saratoga Springs
- Saturday August 18: Orra Phelps Preserve, Wilton
- Tuesday August 21: Ten Springs Woods / Spring Run Trail, Saratoga Springs
- Wednesday September 5: Site tour & habitat improvement work at Karner blue butterfly site, Clifton Park
- Saturday September 15: DesRoches Wildlife Sanctuary, Galway
- Wednesday October 3: Spruce Mountain (leaf peeping), Corinth



Saratoga P.L.A.N.
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