



saratoga
PLAN

Preserving Land and Nature

Spring 2016

fieldnotes

Preserving the
rural character,
natural habitats
and scenic beauty of
Saratoga County.



CONSERVING
FARMLAND



PROTECTING
WOODS + WATERS



BUILDING
TRAILS



*We're at your
service: contact
PLAN's office if
you're interested
in learning how
land conservation
fits into your
plans for your
land's future, your
retirement, or
your estate.*

FARMLAND CONSERVATION GRANTS: SECURING A FUTURE FOR FARMS

AFTER A LONG DROUGHT, STATE FUNDING
FOR FARMLAND CONSERVATION IS
BEGINNING TO FLOW ONCE AGAIN.

PLAN and the Saratoga County Planning Department submitted 7 grant applications to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets in January, seeking \$3.1M to conserve 961 acres of farmland in 4 towns. Matching funds of \$700,000 were offered by Saratoga County, the town of Malta, and the landowners to compete for the state dollars. We are eagerly awaiting word on whether any farms in Saratoga County farms will be selected. Meanwhile, we are preparing another batch of applications due in early June to NYS. In order to apply for the next round of state funding, landowners

interested in applying must have worked with us to understand the conservation easement process, and have completed a site plan and a budget, and are ready to make a firm commitment by April 29th.

COUNTY FUNDING IS ONCE AGAIN
FLOWING TOO.

Saratoga County has set aside \$250,000 in its 2016 budget for land preservation and \$53,000 for trail projects. PLAN is available to assist municipalities and landowners with preparing applications for these funds, awarded on a competitive basis, for worthwhile projects. Application deadlines for 2016 have not yet been announced.

THE BIRDS ARE BACK



at the Ballston Creek Preserve

HAVE YOU VISITED THE BALLSTON CREEK PRESERVE OFF EASTLINE ROAD YET?

This preserve contains a 1 mile trail system riddled throughout 33 acres of woods and wetlands, with an overlook featuring a Great Blue Heron rookery. But heron aren't the only birds you'll find nesting here. Each spring, the rookery is a unique home for Osprey, Canadian Geese, and one Great Horned Owl as well. Don't miss out; stop by before the nestlings fledge!

Great Blue Heron: At first glance, these large birds tend to move quite slowly and methodically, but make no mistake; they can strike with lightning speed when hunting. Keep an eye out for their notably long necks and legs as they scan the area from up high in their nests. *Photo by Gordon Ellmers.*

Osprey: These large raptors are strategic hunters, with well-adapted vision that is ideal for detecting fish underwater. The osprey is the second most widely distributed raptor species, and can be found on every continent of the world except Antarctica. *Photo by Gordon Ellmers.*

Canada Goose: You will likely know these feathered friends well, as they are no stranger to the Saratoga region. These geese are more frequently being found in suburban and even urban environments, as they are drawn to wide-open manicured lawns and fields which give them unobstructed views of any approaching predators. *Photo by Devin Rigolino.*

Great Horned Owl: Our local Great Horned Owl at the Ballston Creek Preserve may be a bit too far off in her nest to notice without binoculars. These owls have become well-known for their piercing, yellow eyes and long, earlike tufts. A skilled hunter, the Great Horned Owl is even capable of taking down birds and mammals that are bigger than itself! *Photo by Gordon Ellmers.*

Visit the **GET INVOLVED - SUBMIT A PHOTO** page of our website to share **your** nature photos, and you may just see it featured in a publication or online!



SERVICES & RESOURCES



for agricultural landowners

PLAN AND THE SARATOGA COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT have teamed up to help landowners understand their options for conserving their farmland. Conserving the best fertile farmland in order to feed current and future populations is a top public priority at all policy levels, but the complex decision to donate or sell a permanent conservation easement rests with each landowner. Landowners need to fully understand all the ramifications of conserving their land when deciding whether it is the right choice for their land at this time.

A series of four workshops were held in town halls in March to introduce the concepts. The workshops are being augmented by printed and online educational reference materials and confidential consultations with landowners to assist them with thoroughly analyzing the options that might work best for their individual situations. Once a landowner decides to proceed, we are there to help through the intensive process of applying for funding and completing the easement process.

Soils, taxes, mapping, landscape context and local land use policies, retirement and estate planning, succession planning, intergenerational transfers, land titles, business planning, debt, land leases, infrastructure improvements, budgeting, and funding programs are a

few of the many issues which can affect a landowner's decision.

To delve further into issues around farmland transfers, other resources are available to help. The Hudson Valley Farmland Finder is an on-line farm listing service for farm properties. It serves as a matching service for farmers looking for land to purchase or lease and for landowners looking to transfer ownership or management of their land. PLAN provides technical assistance to facilitate transfers of farmland ownership or management.

In addition, two workshops are being planned for later this year – one on farmland leasing and another on estate planning, to be held in the summer and fall respectively. Stayed tuned for details.

Helping the towns of Ballston and Stillwater with setting up programs to transfer development rights between properties, thereby conserving some and concentrating development elsewhere, is another service PLAN provides to communities to assist with farmland conservation. In this case, private funds from developers will be used to fund farmland conservation easements.

Saratoga PLAN received a grant from the Hudson Valley FarmLink Network Program again this year, which is enabling us to concentrate on providing services for farmland conservation and farm transfer. The grant program is coordinated by the American Farmland Trust with primary funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEE SARATOGAPLAN.ORG FOR DETAILS

April 27 Fairy House Building Workshop along the Spring Run Trail

May 13-14 Pot Up event for Trees for Tribes at the NYS DEC Saratoga Tree Nursery

June 12 Sundae on the Farm, Turning Point Dairy, Town of Saratoga

TBD nature photography workshops

September 15 Feast of the Fields

A **huge thank you** to all of our dedicated supporters and volunteers. Lasting conservation work requires considerable money and time, and without you, none of this is possible.



The 2016 letterboxing season has officially opened! All of our letterboxes have been re-stocked and put back into their hiding places at PLAN preserves and trails. For more information, to download letterbox clues, or to get directions to letterboxing sites, visit our website's letterboxing page under the Explore section.



THE CHAMPLAIN CANALWAY TRAIL

linking it all together, section by section

SARATOGA PLAN IS EXCITED TO BE PARTNERING WITH the Town of Stillwater in completing a critical section of the Champlain Canalway Trail this year. PLAN and the town will be working together to plan, clear, and build a ~1.5 mile stretch of the trail that will connect Stratton Lane to the Saratoga National Historic Park. The completion of this section of trail would not be possible without support from the Town of Stillwater, Saratoga County, the Champlain Canalway Working Group, and most importantly, YOU! Saratoga PLAN will be looking for eager volunteers willing to help out with the trail clearing over the next several months. If interested in getting involved, please contact Devin at devin@saratogaplan.org.

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Saratoga PLAN is a nonprofit land trust that helps communities make long-term decisions to sustain our region as a great place to live, work, visit, and farm.

PLAN assists landowners with fulfilling their conservation goals for their land and provides stewardship for over 4,407 acres of farmland, forest, natural habitat, trail corridors, historic places, and water resources in Saratoga County.



Preserving Land and Nature

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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OR CALL 518-587-5554



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