



Preserving Working Farms & Connecting People to Their Food



Hudson Valley farms are the primary source of fresh produce for New York City, representing 80 percent of the vendors at its GreenMarkets. They contribute \$530 million in direct economic benefit while supporting a \$4.7-billion tourism economy. Land trusts are leading efforts to ensure permanent protection of the valley's agricultural lands—20 percent of the region's overall landscape. Farms protect our forests, wetlands and watersheds; they also provide scenic backdrops for many cultural and historic treasures. Despite this, the American Farmland Trust has designated the valley one of the country's 10 most threatened agricultural regions. The state loses 10 times more farmland to development than it protects annually. State support for purchasing development rights has been slashed to \$5 million a year—16 percent of 2009's level—despite a \$70-million backlog of approved transactions. Federal funding for New York through the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) averages \$2 million to \$4 million per year, just 3.2 percent of funding over the program's history.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A major federal initiative should be launched to preserve Hudson Valley farmland as a critical food source for New York City and the metropolitan region. Modeled on the historic New York City watershed agreement, a federal-state-NYC-NGO partnership should be established to fully characterize the food supply and fund protection of its land base within 10 years.

Secure a healthy regional food supply

- Dramatically increase Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) funding. The need to protect farmland in key valley agricultural communities exceeds \$100 million. Allow land trusts to receive FRPP funds for easement and non-easement costs. Reduce the requirement for a 50-percent local funding match.

Provide incentives for farmers to protect their land

- Create "Debt for Nature"-like programs that allow farmers debt relief for conserving land or opening farms to passive recreation.
- Offer interest-free loans to young farmers to buy farmland in return for conservation easements.
- Enact new tax tools, including the enhanced federal conservation easement tax incentive, to help farmers and private landowners conserve family lands. Allow landowners to deduct a larger portion of their income over a longer time period. Permanent expansion would be a tremendous boon to conservation by landowners not wealthy enough to take advantage of current reduced incentives.
- Offer transferable tax credits for keeping land in agriculture through easements.
- Provide new farmers access to underutilized federal and state lands at affordable rates for agricultural purposes.

Integrate farmland protection with public education & regional action plans

- Expand the *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* initiative. Implement a public awareness campaign about the links between public health (including obesity and nutrition), farmland protection and the economic viability of the Northeast's agricultural community.
- Expedite the DOI's completion of the *Hudson River Valley Special Resources Study* and ensure it references the nexus between farmland easements and protecting scenic views from National Historic Sites, including Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vanderbilt Mansion and Saratoga Battlefield.

Connecting to Landscape, History & Culture



The Hudson Valley has one of America's largest National Historic Districts and myriad breathtaking parks, all located in a state-designated scenic region that attracts international tourists and provides residents with outstanding quality of life. Land trusts and stewards of historic sites have jointly protected buildings and surrounding lands, but they face a formidable challenge: suburban sprawl that undermines the valley's scenic and historic character. Scenic Hudson's Saving the Land That Matters Most campaign has united 17 land trusts and state agencies to conserve the vital scenic, ecological, recreational and agricultural lands in the Hudson River corridor. This collaboration is hampered by the state's fiscal crisis; its commitment to land conservation has dwindled to 30 percent of 2009 levels.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A strong federal financial partnership with the NGO community could achieve the goal of protecting 65,000 priority acres along this American Heritage River. The federal government should commit to a one-third share of this initiative's cost—projected at \$500 million before the real estate market's collapse—over a 10-year period.

Fully fund conservation in the Hudson Valley

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund.** New York has received just \$228 million of the \$3.7 billion allocated to states; the Hudson Valley, adjacent to New York City, got less than 2 percent of New York's share. Ensure equity among states receiving funds; establish criteria supporting conservation near major population centers.
- **Farm and Ranchland Protection Program.** New York has three times the farmland acreage to protect compared to some neighboring states, yet receives half the funding. Broaden the FRPP to include support for small and mid-sized farms (typical in the Northeast) and reduce the 50-percent matching fund requirement.
- **Highlands Conservation Act.** Authorized for a \$100-million appropriation, the fund has received only \$5.2 million since 2004. Fully funding the program would empower the four states in the Highlands region to conserve this critical urban water resource, recreational outlet and habitat.
- **Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program.** In FY 2010, \$82 million in projects were determined as CECLP-eligible, yet only \$20 million was disbursed. Increase funding to \$50 million nationwide to address this shortfall.
- **National Estuary Program.** Create a regional allocation for the Hudson Valley consistent with Gov. Paterson and NYC Mayor Bloomberg's request for \$52 million for the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program and Hudson River Estuary Program. Invest 20 percent in strategic land conservation along the Hudson River corridor.
- Make land trusts eligible to receive federal land conservation funds.

Support new designations of Hudson Valley landscapes

- Expedite DOI completion of the *Hudson River Valley Special Resources Study*. Ensure it references protecting scenic lands visible from National Historic Sites and calls for federal funds to meet this need.
- Aggressively address the DOI National Historic Landmark committee's 2-year backlog of applications; prioritize review of valley applications. An application was filed in 2008 for West Point Foundry Preserve, awaiting transformation into a heritage-tourism destination. Without approval of NHL designation, it is ineligible for federal grants.

Enact new tax tools & partnership programs to support conservation

- Pass legislation to make the enhanced federal conservation easement tax incentive permanent.
- Enact transferable tax credits for land conservation.



Conserving an Extraordinary Biological Crossroads



The Hudson River estuary ecosystem is of national importance and offers one of the greatest conservation opportunities in the Northeast. A spectacular biological mixing zone, the estuary and its watershed are home to over 180 rare or threatened species and globally significant freshwater tidal habitats. The Hudson Valley's rich biodiversity is part of America's heritage, linking us to our natural and commercial foundations, and provides recreation for nearly 18 million people.

The Hudson Valley ecosystem faces unprecedented challenges. Loss of farmland and forests to sprawling development is fast diminishing valley habitats; roads and subdivisions are separating wetlands and rivers from upland habitats. Climate change will exert tremendous pressure on productive tidal wetlands and signature Hudson Highlands forests. While damaging everywhere, these trends are especially destructive in the Hudson Valley, where species are concentrated in a narrowing arc between the edge of the Highlands and their natural range limits south of Albany.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Conserving and restoring the Hudson River estuary in the 21st century requires a big-picture approach focused on measurable results and long-range planning. An enhanced partnership between federal and state agencies and the private sector can have an ecosystem-wide impact.

Protect, restore and reconnect key habitats

- Increase federal support of the NYS Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda to \$52 million.
- Extend funding beyond the NY/NJ Harbor Program to the entire estuary up to the Troy Dam. Rename program accordingly.
- Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); expand Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) funding. Develop new criteria to support protection and restoration of federally designated estuarine habitats. Make land trusts eligible recipients of these funds.
- Expedite completion of the *Hudson River Valley Special Resources Study Act*. Ensure it includes plans for conserving important natural areas that buffer historic sites, contain habitat for key species and provide recreation.
- Increase funding to protect coastal habitats through the Coastal Estuarine Land Protection program (CECLP). Prioritize funds to projects that protect the Hudson's most important freshwater tidal habitats or expand the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Prepare for climate change

- Enhance technical capacity available through NOAA, USGS and FEMA. Prioritize technical support in areas where sea-level rise threatens critical habitats, recreational access and key public infrastructure.

Improve local management of land & water resources

- Increase support for the Clean Water Revolving Loan and State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs. Broaden the SRF to include green infrastructure projects that protect natural systems as tools to buffer urban areas and natural resources against rising waters, storm surges and floods associated with climate change.



Linking Residents to Green Spaces by Rails, Trails & Waterfront Access



Hudson Valley residents are reconnecting with nature in record numbers—for solitude, recreation, fitness and companionship. The most direct evidence of their thirst for the great outdoors is the popularity of Walkway Over the Hudson, which has attracted 600,000 visitors since its October 2009 opening. This adaptive reuse of an 1888 railroad bridge and an associated loop trail connects people with spectacular Hudson River views, a forested state park and attractions in downtown Poughkeepsie.

Commuter rail service on Metro-North's Hudson Line and Amtrak connect millions of residents from New York City with the valley's nine urban centers that serve as departure points for myriad outdoor destinations, cultural and historic sites—many a short walk away. The Hudson River Valley Greenway is linking bicycle, hiking and water trail routes; the state Hudson River Estuary Program facilitates public access and education at many sites. These efforts support kayak outfitters, bicycle rentals and local accommodations and eateries that contribute to the region's \$4.7-billion tourism economy.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Much more can be done to link rail stops and urban centers with the valley's magnificent but remote outdoor destinations, primarily accessible by car. Expanded rail-trail links and a broader system of clean-vehicle mass transit to outdoor and cultural sites could dramatically expand tourism and recreational opportunities while enhancing public health and economic benefits.

Retool federal transportation programs to support pedestrians & bicyclists

- Direct transportation funding to inventory and convert abandoned rail beds into trails; fill gaps in existing trails. Improve safety and access for pedestrians and bicycles on public roadways.
- Include provisions in the new federal transportation bill to require states to use enhancement funds for trails and non-highway projects, including public access to federal waterways for recreation.
- Increase flexibility in highway design to better accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Require that rail lines owned by operators receiving federal subsidies open access to federal waterways.
- Provide funds to support clean-fueled vans connecting mass-transit stations with outdoor recreation opportunities.

Support new designations of valley recreational destinations

- The DOI should expedite completion of the *Hudson River Valley Special Resources Study* (Rep. Hinchey, Sen. Gillibrand sponsors). Ensure it references the importance of providing links between city and town centers and outlying open spaces, recreational lands and historic sites.
- Expand "National Recreational Trail" designation beyond Walkway Over the Hudson to include other trails; accompany with funding to enhance the trail system and related recreation in trailside communities.

Create urban green spaces to manage water resources & provide enjoyment

- Support the Clean Water Revolving Loan program and State Revolving Fund (SRF)—a critical tool for mitigating flood damage and providing clean water. Broaden the SRF to include green infrastructure projects that create soft-engineered systems.



Educating & Inspiring People in Parks & the Great Outdoors

Linda Houlihan



The Hudson Valley is primed to reinvigorate children's connection to nature. The state Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Program has developed K-6 curriculum that encourages and supports teachers to use the Hudson River as a learning tool. Citizen science projects span the estuary's length, using its ecosystem as a focus of study. Via its Teaching the Hudson Valley program, the National Park Service shares our region's heritage through curriculum development, grants and an annual summer teacher institute that promotes professional development with a place-based approach. Hudson River Sloop Clearwater connects youth with the river through its Next Generation of Environmental Leaders initiative. Scenic Hudson and other land trusts offer place-based, hands-on learning in a variety of urban and rural park settings along the riverfront and throughout the watershed.

While strong collaboration and effective programs exist, the region is changing. Population is rising, with much of the growth focused in urban centers where young people do not have the same opportunities to experience the great outdoors. Many academics note a growing disconnect between youth and the natural world that sustains them.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Federal resources and legislation will provide a mandate to connect children to the great outdoors, enabling the valley's environmental educators to broaden the reach of their place-based work into underserved communities and provide new places to engage schoolchildren with nature.

Retool education policy to support environmental literacy

- Pass No Child Left Inside legislation. Dedicate funding for states to incorporate environmental learning from pre-K to 12th grade, as well as teacher development.
- Support inclusion of environmental literacy language in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- Provide funding (through the National Estuary Program) for the NYS Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda, a key player in the valley's environmental education community.
- Support funding for the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, which offers critical support for Teaching the Hudson Valley.
- Include environmental education as a goal in the draft strategic plan for the EPA; align work on this goal with the National Environmental Education Act.

Provide incentives for conservation programs promoting access & education

- Increase funding and make land trusts eligible recipients of funds through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Give special consideration to land trusts actively working to facilitate public use of protected landscapes, especially for hands-on education programs that partner with school districts and youth service providers.

Support new designations connecting youth with the great outdoors

- The DOI should expedite completion of the *Hudson River Valley Special Resources Study* (Rep. Hinchey, Sen. Gillibrand sponsors). Ensure it identifies roles for agencies to support valley educators connecting youth to nationally significant natural landscapes.

Support entry-level conservation opportunities for college graduates

- Support programs such as the Student Conservation Association and AmeriCorps.
- Support conservation mentoring programs and "green job" training initiatives targeting middle and high school-aged youth.



Enhancing Tourism & Recreational Opportunities



The Hudson Valley's world-class natural beauty and historic attractions—linchpins of a \$4.7-billion tourism economy—make the region one of New York's top three tourist destinations. Within an hour's drive of 1 in 12 Americans, the valley is a true gateway. Its landscapes offer renowned rock climbing, hiking and kayaking, while its heritage sites tell America's story. Cultural opportunities include scenic farms, fine dining and myriad arts venues.

The public has a strong interest in accessing these resources; 2009 festivities marking the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage up the river drew record crowds to its shores. Destinations such as Olana State Historic Site and Walkway Over the Hudson (which has drawn 600,000 visitors since its October 2009 opening) are major attractions. Regional events like the Great Hudson River Paddle and Hudson River Valley Ramble help sustain our economy. Plans are underway for a 2011 Hudson Valley Heritage Weekend offering education and recreation all along the river.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

People are hungry to get outdoors in the Hudson Valley, but federal resources are needed to protect key destinations, develop public awareness of its special sites and make them accessible.

Land conservation critical to protect recreation & tourism sites

- Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Highlands Conservation Act (HCA). Private land trusts should be eligible to directly receive funds to conserve recreational and working landscapes and scenic lands surrounding heritage destinations.
- Pass legislation making the enhanced federal conservation easement tax incentive permanent.
- Aggressively address the DOI National Historic Landmark committee's 2-year backlog of applications; prioritize review of valley applications. An application was filed in 2008 for West Point Foundry Preserve, awaiting transformation into a heritage-tourism destination. Without approval of NHL designation, it is ineligible for federal grants.
- Fully fund the Historic Preservation Fund.

Planning & marketing of regional events

- Jumpstart the newly created National Tourism Office; fund regional events in the Hudson Valley. Federal funds will be leveraged by state investments via the Hudson River Valley Greenway and I Love NY campaign.
- Direct Travel and Regional Investment Partnership (TRIP) grants to the Hudson Valley to support marketing efforts.
- Sustain funding for the National Heritage Area program, which provides important support to the Hudson River Valley Greenway to interpret the region's natural and heritage tourism destinations.
- Reduce liability for large-scale public events that introduce many people to the outdoors.

Make waterfronts, heritage sites & open space accessible

- Retool transportation programs to support pedestrian and bicycle links to mass transit and recreational, cultural and historic destinations.
- Fund professional organizers to implement recreational outings; network with the valley's recreational outfitters.
- Support initiatives that link destinations with each other and major transportation hubs. Fund ferries and other mass-transit to connect people to waterfronts, kayaking opportunities and water trails.
- Support physical trail connections that link urban areas with nearby open spaces and waterfronts; ensure access for all ages and abilities where feasible.
- Require that rail lines receiving federal subsidies open access to federal waterways.

Improving Water Quality in the Hudson River



For over four decades, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Riverkeeper and Scenic Hudson have worked together to protect the Hudson River and its shores while enhancing residents' quality of life. All three organizations played important advocacy roles in passage of the federal Clean Air and Clean Water Acts and led the 25-year fight to compel General Electric to clean up the 1.3 million pounds of PCBs in our river. Now, the America's Great Outdoors Initiative presents us with the prime opportunity to spur increased awareness of the Hudson River's importance as a natural resource and a foundation for creating a sustainable economic future for the valley.

The Hudson River plays an essential role in sustaining the region's prosperity and quality of life. Each year, millions of citizens spend time in or on the river, boating, swimming, fishing or simply walking along its banks. Thanks to the hard work of individuals, environmental organizations and government agencies, water quality in the Hudson has improved dramatically since passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. **However, we still haven't achieved the act's goal of a "fishable, swimmable" Hudson River, where water quality is regularly tested and reported and the public can safely recreate in a Hudson that is free of sewage from outdated stormwater and wastewater infrastructure; where Hudson Valley residents can once again eat local fish without health concerns, and sustainable commercial fisheries can thrive.** Sewage pollution from aging infrastructure, toxic PCBs that General Electric dumped into the river in the 1970s and declining fish stocks due to overfishing and power plant intakes remain as our most persistent environmental challenges.

Up and down the banks of the Hudson River, power plants dot the landscape, many of them continuing to use outdated technology known as once-through cooling. **These plants withdraw billions of gallons of Hudson River water each day to produce electricity. While generating record profits, they are extracting an even larger cost on our river's aquatic life. This enormous water use needlessly kills billions of fish, eggs and larvae each year, an impact that could be almost entirely eliminated through the use of closed-cycle cooling systems.**

On May 15, 2009, the historic, long-awaited cleanup of PCBs in the Upper Hudson began. But this battle is far from over. **After the first phase of the dredging of PCBs was completed this past spring, General Electric has been trying to backpedal on its commitment to clean up the Hudson, raising concerns over dredging impacts and proposing to leave more PCBs in place rather than removed from the river.**

Oxygen levels in the Hudson River are decreasing because of increases in temperature and other nonnatural causes such as sewage overflows caused by outmoded combined sewer and stormwater systems. As wet weather events are the primary trigger behind pathogenic overflows into our waterways, environmental regulators and planners must focus on reducing stormwater flows before they reach the sewer system in the first place. Implementing "Green Infrastructure" designs such as green roofs, permeable pavement and rain barrels can dramatically reduce stormwater pollution and "green" urban areas, providing a double benefit of reducing pollution and improving city dwellers' quality of life.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

If we want to be able to enjoy the Hudson, protect our wildlife and keep our drinking water safe, we've got to keep pollution out of the river and away from our water supplies. That means enforcing our environmental laws and investing in infrastructure. If we do these two things, people will be healthier, recreational opportunities will improve and communities will become more vibrant. If we don't make the investment now, it will end up costing more and achieving less as time goes on.

- **Federal funding for communities/municipalities to sample and report on water quality.** Improving water quality must be a priority in any valley/river-wide initiative, because it implicates so many other issues—recreation, ecosystem health, public health, tourism (economic benefits). Federal funding for local governments to sample and report on water quality in their part of the river is a fundamental way to engage the public on creating solutions and augment existing environmental education programs.
- **Establishing a Clean Water Trust Fund.** Such a fund would bridge the major gap between needs and availability and ensure that counties and municipalities have a reliable, steady source of funding to address water infrastructure needs. A dedicated Clean Water Trust Fund would establish the equitable distribution of funds across the board, regardless of a community's size or location.
- **Protecting and restoring key Hudson River fish populations and the habitats that support them.** Preserving and restoring historic Hudson River fisheries, such as American shad and striped bass, depends on collaborative action to restore critical river and shoreline habitat and improving regulation of offshore commercial fisheries. On the habitat side, increased collaboration and participation from the Army Corps of Engineers, DEC and NOAA in restoring fish spawning habitat such as tidal and freshwater wetlands and Upper Hudson tributaries will reap long-term rewards. On the fisheries side, improving the capacity of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and DEC fisheries to work together on monitoring and enforcement can stem the tide of destructive overfishing, and lead to sustainable fish stocks that can support recreational and possibly commercial fisheries in the future. In addition, National Park Service designations have been successful at making the link to the public between aesthetic/recreational enjoyment of the "outdoors" and the value of a healthy ecosystem.
- **Restore the Hudson estuary and its shore lands.** The NYS Hudson River Estuary Program has engaged more than 500 partners to restore and manage critical habitats and systems in our watershed, yet federal funding for our nationally significant estuary is virtually non-existent. Governor Paterson and NYC Mayor Bloomberg have issued a request for \$52 million in funds for the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program and NYS Hudson River Estuary Program from the National Estuary Program to save what may be the last eastern river to have viable spawning stocks of oceangoing fish. This investment will sustain the Hudson River as a vital natural resource that is appreciated by the 1 in 12 Americans who live within an hour's drive of its shores.