



We received a lot of positive response to our first edition of Greener Valley. We're delighted to provide you—our partners in protecting the region's irreplaceable landscapes—with important and useful information about land conservation.

Since the last newsletter, we've gained 13 new partners. Thanks to 10 Columbia County landowners, we've protected 522 more acres of productive farmland, adding to our "critical mass" of farms in communities whose economies depend on agriculture. In Warwick, Orange County, we joined with the town and the Orange County Land Trust to purchase development rights on our fifth farm, 293 acres near the Black Dirt region. In Marlborough, Ulster County, we acquired an easement on 72 acres of a high-profile farm in the famed—and severely threatened—"fruit belt." We hope this builds local support to safeguard more farms. Not far away in Esopus, another landowner helped us preserve 40 scenic acres.

Please continue sending me your questions, comments or suggestions. Thanks.

David Diaz, Conservation Easement Manager
845 473 4440, ext. 223
ddiaz@scenichudson.org

Scenic Hudson Land Preservation:

- Acres protected to date: 9,776
- Number of conservation easements: 96
- Largest easement: 778 acres
- Smallest easement: 1.70 acres

**We couldn't do it without
partners like you.**



Overlook Farm, Marlborough, Ulster County



NATIVE PLANTS CAN IMPROVE YOUR LAND

Our last newsletter highlighted the negative impacts of invasives. Continuing that thread, here are some native plants that are perfect replacements for these pesky intruders.

Over the last decade, landowners have started to recognize that native plants not only provide healthy habitats and food sources for people and wildlife, but contribute to the diversity and beauty of our landscapes. These suggested replacement species are all Hudson Valley natives.

INVASIVE SPECIES	NATIVE REPLACEMENT
Tree of heaven <i>(Ailanthus altissima)</i>	Allegheny serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>) Tree reaches up to 40 ft. tall. Fruit attracts birds. White flowers in spring, orange leaves in fall.
Japanese honeysuckle <i>(Lonicera japonica)</i>	Scarlet honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>) Twining vine up to 12 ft. long. Deep red flowers, red berries in summer/fall.
Purple loosestrife <i>(Lythrum salicaria)</i>	Fireweed (<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>) Purplish flowers; spreads easily.
Asian bittersweet <i>(Celastrus orbiculatus)</i>	American bittersweet (<i>Celastrus scandens</i>) Vine grows up to 20 ft. Birds like red-orange fruits. (Be sure the plant you buy is the <i>scandens</i> species.)
Japanese wisteria <i>(Wisteria floribunda)</i>	Virginia creeper (<i>Parthenocissus quiquefolia</i>) Climbing vine or ground cover grows up to 50 ft.; easily pruned. Deep blue fruits, red leaves in fall.
Chinese wisteria <i>(Wisteria sinensis)</i>	

ALLEGHENY SERVICEBERRY



SCARLET HONEYSUCKLE



FIREWEED



AMERICAN BITTERSWEET



VIRGINIA CREEPER



UPDATE—TAX INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Expanded federal tax incentives for donated conservation easements are due to expire on Monday, Dec. 31. After that they'll revert to less generous provisions—unless the Senate and House pass legislation introduced to make them permanent.

What are the advantages of current incentives?

- The yearly deduction landowners can take for donating an easement is raised from 30 percent of income to 50 percent.
- Qualifying farmers can deduct up to 100 percent of their income over time.
- Donors can take deductions over 16 years, instead of 6.

How does it work?

Now if a landowner with an adjusted gross income of \$50,000 donated a conservation easement with an appraised value of \$250,000, he or she could deduct \$25,000 per year (50% x \$50,000) for 10 years—for a total deduction of \$250,000.

Under previous incentives, the landowner could only deduct \$15,000 a year (30% x \$50,000) for 6 years—for a total deduction of \$90,000.

And who couldn't use an extra \$160,000 in tax benefits?

Your legislator needs to hear from you

Working farms and open land safeguard the valley's water supply, preserve our rural charm and serve as economic engines for many communities. Contact your federal legislators and let them know land conservation is critical to our future—and that current tax incentives should become permanent. For more information about the pending bills, log onto www.lta.org/publicpolicy/tax_incentives_updates.htm.



A RISING TIDE FOR LAND PROTECTION

There's good news on the land-protection front, marked by a rising tide in efforts to halt costly runaway growth throughout the region. On May 1 citizens in Red Hook, Dutchess County, approved a Community Preservation Fund (CPF). It provides a dedicated account, funded by a one-time fee paid only by buyers of higher-priced real estate, for protecting drinking water, open space and working farms. It's a huge victory for responsible development, a key to our future prosperity. It should be an incentive for more local municipalities to get on the CPF bandwagon.

In Westchester and Putnam counties, towns no longer have to get time-consuming prior approval from the state Senate and Assembly before considering CPFs. The Hudson Valley Community Preservation Law, enacted in July, makes it easier for communities facing some of the region's fiercest development pressures to bring CPFs to a vote. The legislation enables residents to safeguard the rapidly vanishing landscapes and historic downtowns that fuel their economy and contribute to our quality of life.



LANDOWNER Q&A— Jerry Simonetty

Scenic Hudson already held a conservation easement on the 142-acre property Jerry Simonetty purchased in Red Hook, Dutchess County, in 2001. A member of Hudson Valley Fresh, his Sim-Kno Farms produces milk, hay and Holsteins.

Q: Why should the public buy local food?

A: You can actually see the farms and the farmers. With food packaged far away, you have no idea how it was produced. Plus it doesn't have the positive impact on the local economy that buying food from area farms does.

Q: What is Hudson Valley Fresh?

A: It's a non-profit cooperative involving 10 local dairy farms. A portion of our milk each week is bottled and sold directly to markets, schools and restaurants. The public gets hormone-free milk that's usually on shelves 12 to 24 hours after it leaves the cow. The milk is flash-pasteurized, preserving its flavor and retaining more natural vitamins. Farmers see a higher return on milk Hudson Valley Fresh sells, which is good for keeping us in business.

Q: How hard is it to be a farmer today?

A: It's a lot of physical work and more expensive to produce in the Hudson Valley than elsewhere in New York. The costs of maintenance, taxes and services are all higher here. A big issue is assessed land value and its effect on taxes. It takes a lot of land to produce food and keep a farm going. So when assessed values are high, it puts farmers out of business.

Q: Are you glad you purchased a farm protected by a conservation easement?

A: I had what I'd call "healthy skepticism" at first. I really didn't know how the easement thing would play out. I've since had a good relationship with Scenic Hudson and am very happy the land is protected. I know this will be a farm even when I'm no longer alive.

Q: What are you most proud of about your farm?

A: It was really rundown when I bought it. The fields and barns were disasters. I'm very proud that we have rehabilitated the farm to what you see now. The structures are all in great shape and I'm producing milk and high-quality hay as well.

To learn more about Hudson Valley Fresh, visit

www.hudsonvalleyfresh.com.

Scenic Hudson's Mission

Scenic Hudson is dedicated to protecting, preserving and restoring the Hudson and the riverfront as a public and natural resource.

www.scenichudson.org