



ANNUAL REPORT 2018





To our supporters,

Scenic Hudson's recent accomplishments deliver huge benefits—providing outdoor exercise and relaxation, clean air and drinking water, fresh food and fun activities for children to explore nature. Adding to our 55-year track record of protecting and connecting people to the Hudson Valley's natural treasures, we:

- Conserved a world-class landscape in the Hudson Highlands, assuring permanent public access to one of the region's premier hiking trails and safeguarding inspiring vistas from Storm King Mountain and other popular viewpoints;
- Created an exciting new park within a Catskills landscape immortalized on canvas by Hudson River School painter Thomas Cole; and
- Rallied a groundswell of citizen activists to help us block plans to establish new barge anchorages on the Hudson that could have led to increased crude oil shipments and the potential for spills.

Over the last year, we also broadened our impacts—and took steps to ensure all people benefit from our work—by focusing on three emerging themes: Promoting Regional Identity, Building Community and Strengthening Resiliency. By enhancing our partnerships with citizens and groups in the valley's diverse communities, urban and rural, we've already made great strides in:

- Transforming neglected natural treasures in our inner cities into safe and engaging places for residents and visitors to explore nature, enjoy outdoor recreation and come together; and
- Making the Hudson Valley a model for embracing renewable energy without destroying iconic views, productive farmland and irreplaceable habitat.

Scenic Hudson's work is especially gratifying because it unites you with people across the valley—to express concerns at a community meeting, blaze a new trail, send emails urging a more comprehensive PCB cleanup or count eels swimming up a Hudson River tributary. Through your shared commitment, you become a powerful force for safeguarding those natural assets that attract visitors from around the world and, more important, make this a healthy and fun place to raise our families.

Board Chair

President

PROMOTING REGIONAL IDENTITY



We strive to preserve the natural beauty that defines the Hudson Valley and provide everyone with access to the benefits of our unique environment: outdoor recreation, a healthy lifestyle, clean water and a vibrant economy



2018 RESULTS

Enhanced your enjoyment of **natural and scenic beauty** by preserving **1,711 acres**

Sustained supplies of **fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy products** to your table by conserving **2,242 acres** on **14 family farms**



Increased **outdoor recreational experiences** by providing **3 miles of new trails** and making excellent progress on **two trail projects spanning 20 miles**

Safeguarded **water supplies** on which **175,000 valley residents** depend

Protected the Hudson River from threats by rallying more than **6,500 citizen activists** to take action





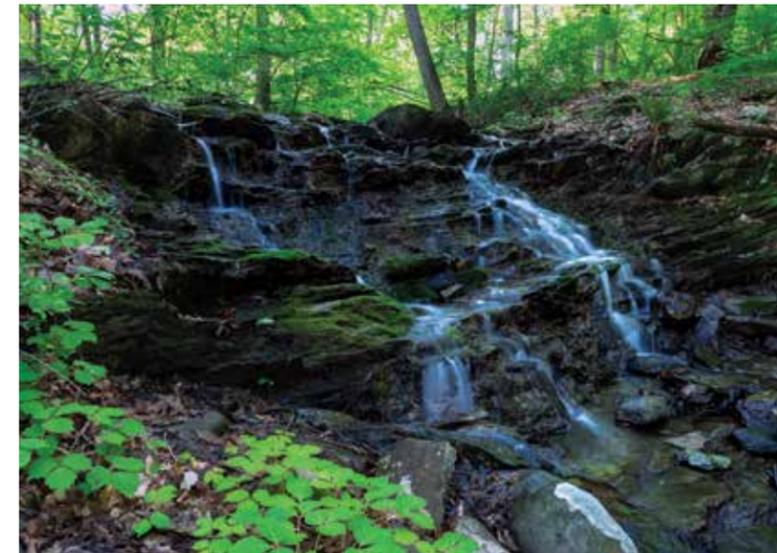
PROMOTING REGIONAL IDENTITY

Preserving Natural Treasures

The Hudson Valley's great open and wild spaces are major reasons why people escape here—for a day or a lifetime—and that's why preserving them remains Scenic Hudson's core mission.

Providing permanent access for hikers to the world-famous trail linking Breakneck Ridge and Mount Beacon—that's one reason Slopeline, LLC (a Scenic Hudson affiliate), protected 1,178 acres on Scofield Ridge (left) in the Hudson Highlands. The acquisition also safeguards iconic vistas from the Newburgh waterfront and other popular destinations. Upriver in Poughkeepsie, we ensured hikers and joggers will always enjoy the 149 acres of woods and meadows (below) at Locust Grove, the estate of artist and telegraph inventor Samuel F.B. Morse. It's rare for such unspoiled natural beauty to exist so close to suburban development.

And fly-fishing enthusiasts have cause to rejoice—in Dutchess County we conserved a half-mile stretch of prime trout habitat in Wicopee Creek (above).





PROMOTING REGIONAL IDENTITY

Conserving Family Farms

Nothing beats the taste of a just-picked apple or an ear of corn—that's reason enough for Scenic Hudson to protect the region's farmland. But we also do it to promote good health, power the exploding farm-to-table movement in the valley and New York City, support local farmers markets that feed and knit together our communities, and sustain the operations of the hard-working families who supply them.

Farms we conserved with farmers and land trust partners* last year produce everything from broccoli to beef and artisanal cheese to cantaloupes. Nutritious and vitamin-packed, this food reaches our tables via farmstands, local and GrowNYC greenmarkets, CSAs and grocery stores. These farms also help to maintain the valley's rural charm and agricultural heritage. Some of the fields we protected have been farmed by the same families since the 1700s, while others will provide a place for young farmers to lease affordable land, beginning what we hope will be a long and bountiful career.

**See inside back cover for a list of farmland protection partners*





PROMOTING REGIONAL IDENTITY

Providing Outdoor Adventures

Scenic Hudson parks are prime destinations for residents and visitors to keep in shape, breathe fresh air, spend a fun-filled afternoon with the family, and (if you're lucky) catch a fish or spot a bald eagle. Last year, we provided new opportunities for you to explore the valley's wild side.

We partnered with the Greene Land Trust to open Mawignack Preserve, whose mile-long trail parallels a serenely beautiful section of Catskill Creek, and constructed a staircase at our West Point Foundry Preserve in Cold Spring that leads to an overlook (below left) offering outstanding Hudson River and Highlands vistas.

The Hudson River Skywalk (below right) now makes it possible to "step into" the magnificent landscapes depicted in paintings by Hudson River School painters Thomas Cole and Frederic Church. The mile-long pedestrian trail across the Rip Van Winkle Bridge connects Church's Olana estate near Hudson with Cole's home in Catskill and affords panoramic river and mountain views. We're protecting nearby lands and creating trails for this collaborative project, which is expected to generate \$4.5 million annually in new tourism spending.





PROMOTING REGIONAL IDENTITY

Engaging Citizen Activists

When valley residents join forces to protect the natural assets that sustain our health and quality of life, people in power listen. Responding to our e-alerts, thousands of you last year urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to postpone a decision about the effectiveness of the Hudson River PCB cleanup until it examined data indicating that the project has not met its health and environmental goals. The EPA heeded your call and is taking a closer look at the need for a more comprehensive cleanup that will make the river safe for people and wildlife.

The U.S. Coast Guard also responded when a groundswell of citizen activists spoke out against a proposal to establish 10 new anchorages in the Hudson River for up to 43 barges carrying crude oil and other hazardous chemicals. In March they abandoned the plans, which would have increased the likelihood of catastrophic spills that could damage fragile aquatic habitats and foul drinking water supplies.



BUILDING COMMUNITY

We provide citizens with the tools and support for maximizing use of unique local resources to strengthen their communities—both urban and rural

2018 RESULTS

Tapped into local **civic pride** in Newburgh and Poughkeepsie by engaging more than **250 volunteers** to remove **2,200 pounds of litter**



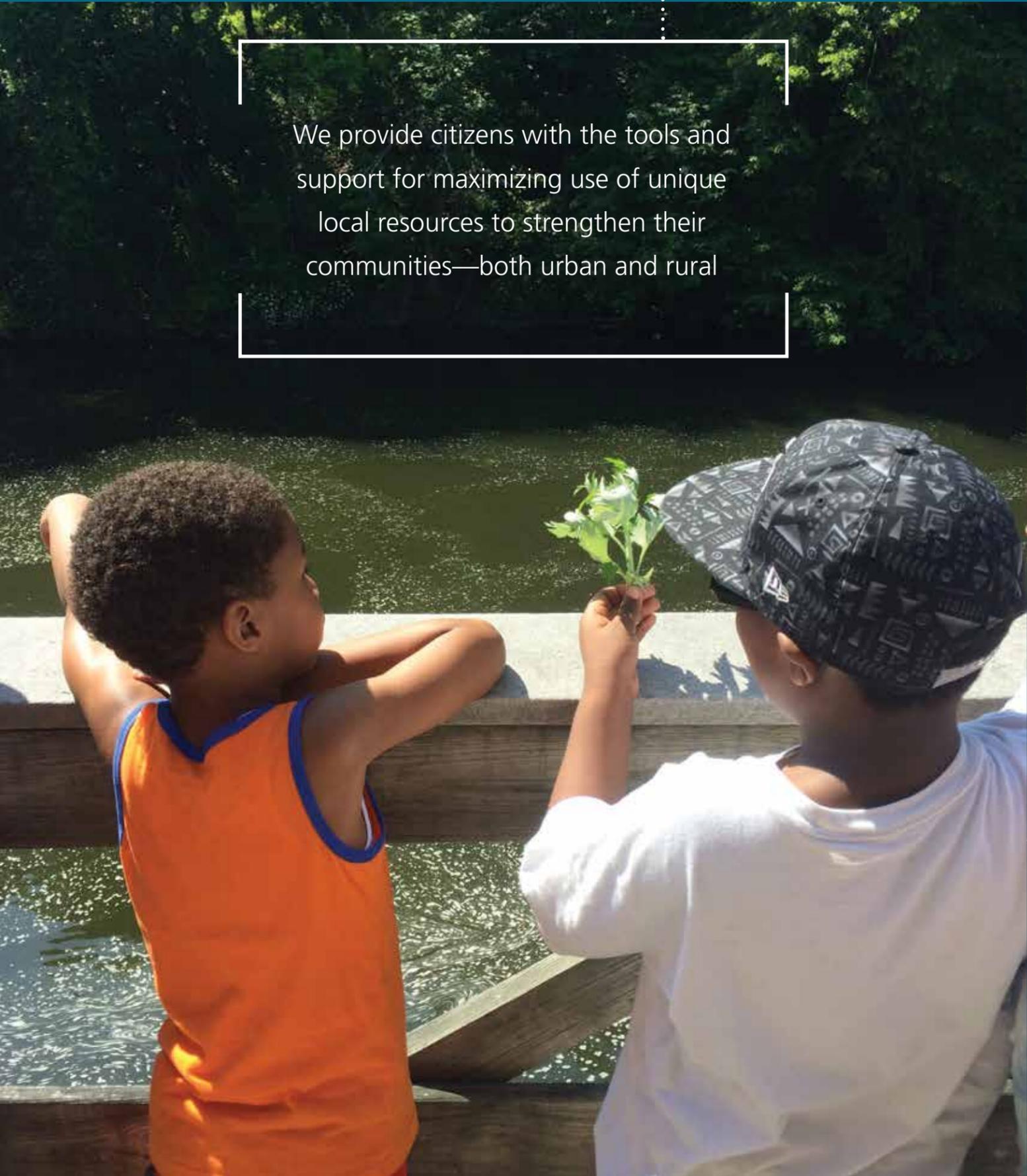
Provided **outdoor fun** for children and families by hosting **12 free park events** enjoyed by **2,225 people**



Taught important **lessons about nature** to nearly **1,100 schoolchildren** at “outdoor classrooms” in our parks

Provided an exciting place to **explore wildlife** for more than **1,000 Kingston middle schoolers**

Supported efforts to **revitalize downtowns** in valley cities by engaging **30 non-profits, colleges, schools and government agencies** to partner with us





BUILDING COMMUNITY

Restoring Natural Assets

Having safe, inviting places to spend time outdoors—what most of us take for granted—was a goal expressed by many inner-city residents who attended listening sessions we hosted in Poughkeepsie and Newburgh last year. In response, Scenic Hudson is helping them transform neglected natural treasures in their “backyards” into neighborhood assets where people can enjoy recreation, relaxation and the healing power of nature.

In the heart of Newburgh, residents have an exciting new opportunity to picnic, hike, catch fish and explore nature. Dozens of volunteers (this page) joined us to restore access to the city’s Crystal Lake property, once a popular swimming spot but virtually abandoned since the 1970s. Now we’re working together to create a 1.5-mile trail from the lakefront to the top of Snake Hill and magnificent views of the Hudson River and Highlands.

Our collaborative initiative in Poughkeepsie to clean up Fall Kill Creek (left), create a flood-resilient linear park and revitalize neighborhoods along it also has drawn inspiring local support. Teens engaged in the project are learning new skills—from the ABCs of park planning to restoring native wildlife—and seem to be having lots of fun.





BUILDING COMMUNITY

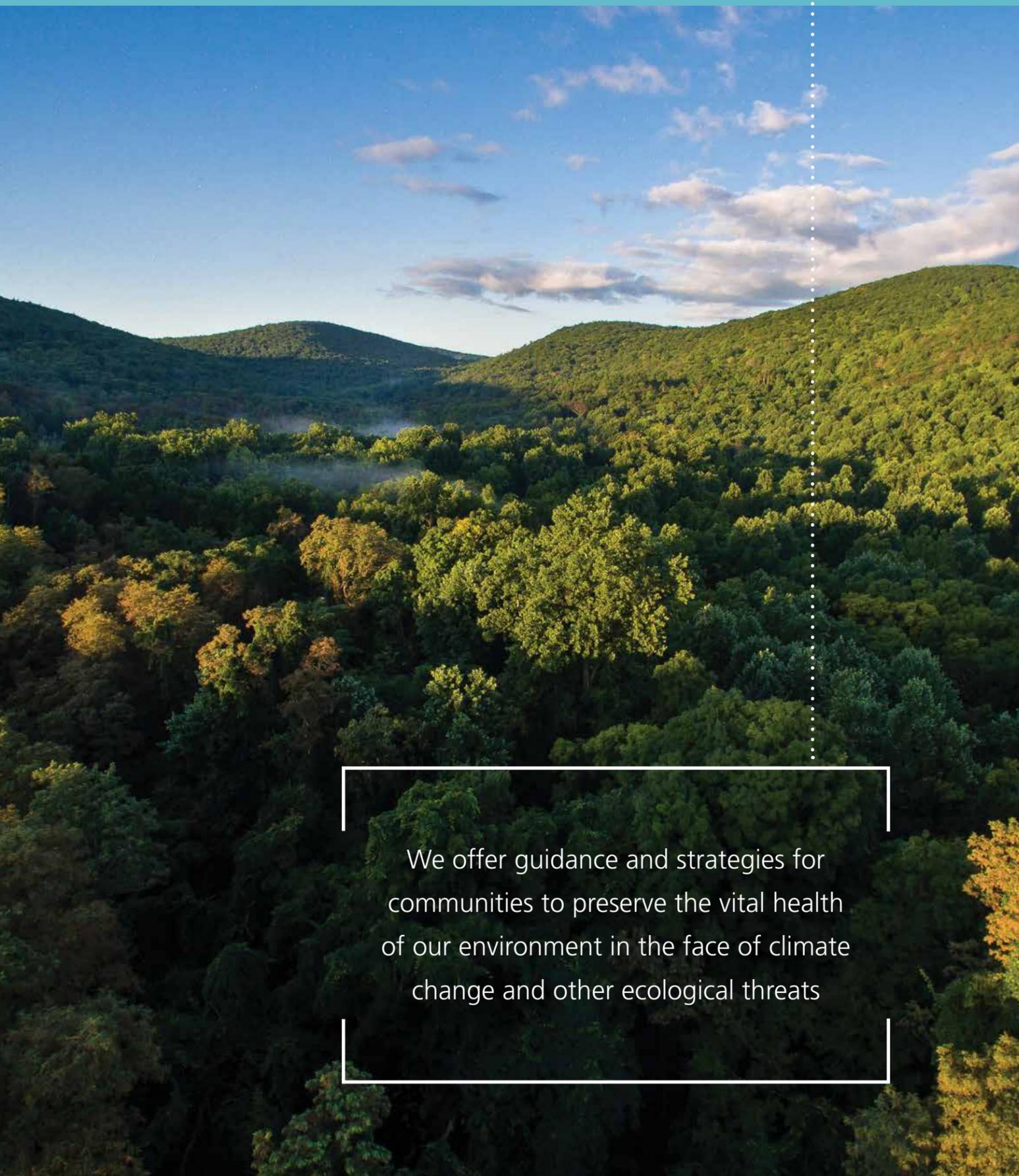
Energizing & Empowering Youth

Young people have a big stake in creating a clean, healthy environment—their future depends on it. Taking part in Poughkeepsie Middle School’s Summer Learning Academy, Scenic Hudson educators provided sixth graders with classroom and in-the-field lessons about the Hudson River’s aquatic habitats and why it’s so important to conserve them. The program concluded with the enthusiastic students sharing their new knowledge with visitors at Poughkeepsie’s waterfront park (above). And thanks to a summer youth employment program hosted by The Art Effect (and funded in part by Scenic Hudson), two sites along Poughkeepsie’s Fall Kill Creek now feature sculptures created by the teens (left). Items they found while undertaking cleanups along the creek feature prominently in their works.

A partnership we fostered with students in Newburgh Free Academy’s Excelsior Academy also produced awesome results. In addition to participating in cleanups around Crystal Lake, they planned and planted gardens at the site (below), all the while learning applicable job skills. This year, they’ll visit other parks to learn ways they can make the lake an even greater asset to their community.



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCY



We offer guidance and strategies for communities to preserve the vital health of our environment in the face of climate change and other ecological threats

2018 RESULTS

Allowed **nature to thrive** by holding **31 workdays** where **414 volunteers** removed harmful invasive plants and replaced them with native species

Created **new habitat and prevented erosion** by planting nearly **100 trees and shrubs** in our parks

Helped the valley's **plants and animals become more resilient to climate change** by safeguarding **1,300 acres of irreplaceable habitat**

Promoted **renewable energy** by drawing more than **225 people** to our solar energy symposium and distributing more than **750 copies** of our new solar siting guide

Helped secure a **\$300-million** appropriation for NY's Environmental Protection Fund, which bankrolls the state's investment in projects to protect land, provide clean water and support communities' efforts to mitigate climate change impacts





STRENGTHENING RESILIENCY

Securing a Bright Energy Future

Putting the brakes on climate change—the greatest threat facing our valley—depends, in part, on embracing renewable energy, which also could attract high-paying jobs to the region. But new solar and wind facilities also have the potential to mar iconic views, farms and wildlife habitat. Since our March publication of *Clean Energy, Green Communities*, the region’s first-ever guide to siting renewable energy, it has become a go-to resource, both in the valley and nationally. It encourages communities and energy developers to achieve win-win solutions by locating facilities where they will minimize impacts to these vital resources (like the new solar “farm” atop Beacon’s former landfill, below).

Projects like these will help New York achieve its ambitious renewable energy goals, which can’t be said for plans to build two new gas-fired power plants in the valley. We’ve joined collaborative campaigns to block construction of these facilities, which would pollute our air with climate-warming carbon and chemicals that cause acid rain.





STRENGTHENING RESILIENCY

Keeping Wildlife Safe & Healthy

Climate change also impacts the valley's great variety of plants and animals on which humans depend for food, clean air and water, flood protection and controlling harmful pests—not to mention recreation like birdwatching and hunting.

We continue helping wildlife adapt by targeting the protection of lands containing diverse and irreplaceable habitat, as well as migration pathways that species depend on for survival. The acquisition of Scofield Ridge by Slopeline, LLC, preserves a major portion of one of southeastern New York's largest intact forests, which sustains the Hudson Valley's greatest concentration of imperiled wildlife species. In New Baltimore, Greene County, we ensured the integrity of 172 contiguous acres of habitat (below) by conserving 24 acres of woods and wetlands bordered on three sides by lands we acquired in 2014.

Warming temperatures also make it easier for some harmful, non-native species to thrive in our region. These fast-growing "invasive" plants crowd out native species and are less beneficial for local wildlife. That's why we depend on volunteers to help us get the upper hand—by removing them and replacing them with plants that support a healthy environment.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Our focus is on strengthening and maximizing benefits all can enjoy from the Hudson Valley's great assets—beautiful open spaces, working farms, and vibrant cities and town centers

Scenic Hudson's total consolidated operating and capital budget during the year was \$18.9 million and included three components: the Scenic Hudson operating budget and The Scenic Hudson Land Trust operating and capital budgets.

Scenic Hudson

Scenic Hudson's operating budget for FY18 was \$8.5 million. The funds enabled Scenic Hudson to preserve world-class vistas, irreplaceable wildlife habitat and family farms supplying healthy food; partner with communities and others to provide beautiful new places for people to exercise and explore nature; and mobilize citizens to join our campaigns to make the Hudson River cleaner, safer and more accessible. These funds also supported efforts to broaden our impacts by promoting regional identity, building community and strengthening resiliency—further enhancing benefits valley residents and visitors receive from our work protecting land, creating parks and halting threats to the region's natural beauty.

The Scenic Hudson Land Trust

The land trust spent \$6.5 million in capital to secure conservation easements on farms and acquire ecologically important lands along the Hudson that will provide outstanding new recreational opportunities for people who live, work and play in the region. The land trust spent \$3.9 million for creating, maintaining and improving our parks; for staff costs in monitoring conservation easements; and for working with partners to promote the Foodshed Conservation Plan and Hudson Valley Conservation Strategy. For every dollar of Scenic Hudson capital, we leveraged more than two dollars of private or governmental funds.

Financial Structure

Scenic Hudson maintains four endowments: The Lila Acheson and DeWitt Wallace Hudson Valley Land Preservation Endowment (\$174.6 million at year-end FY18), used to support land conservation activities; a board-designated fund for general operating expenses (\$17.9 million at year-end FY18); the Kathryn W. Davis Fund for Park Planning and Community Land Use (\$5.1 million at year-end FY18); and an Easement Enforcement Fund (\$0.9 million at year-end FY18). The assets are pooled in a diversified portfolio supervised by an investment committee. Total investment return was 8.8 percent for FY18. The board approved \$8.5 million in spending from the endowments for the year (5 percent of the past 12 quarters' rolling average value).

Although lands owned by the land trust are eligible for tax exemption, Scenic Hudson paid \$164,832 in property taxes and payments in lieu of taxes in FY18 and \$195,333 in FY17. Scenic Hudson generally seeks relief from taxes at the first opportunity following acquisition of the property.

The board engages Marks Paneth, LLP to perform an independent annual audit, which is available on our website.

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 2018	June 30, 2017
Land areas (at cost)	58,413	54,732
Cash and investments	229,573	219,449
Other assets	11,546	15,363
Total assets	299,532	289,544
Liabilities	4,289	3,516
Net assets	295,243	286,028
Total liabilities and net assets	299,532	289,544

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Hudson River Stewardship Society

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LONG-TERM FINANCIAL PLANS

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Farmland protection partners

In addition to the farm families, those collaborating with Scenic Hudson to conserve farmland last year included Agricultural Stewardship Association, Columbia Land Conservancy, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Orange County Land Trust, Somers Land Trust, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Westchester Land Trust, Equity Trust, GrowNYC, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Dutchess County, Ulster County, Westchester County, Town of New Paltz, Town of Red Hook, Town of Somers, Dirt Capital Partners LLC.

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