



**SCENIC
HUDSON
.ORG**

2022
annual
REPORT





Ramping up to Protect the Valley's Natural Bounty for All

Scenic Hudson continues to be a game-changer in our core mission of protecting the Hudson Valley and connecting people to its natural treasures, while we fight climate change and partner in the cause of environmental justice for all.

Our milestone accomplishments include:

- Partnering in the opening of magnificent Sojourner Truth State Park on 520 acres we protected along the Kingston waterfront;
- Completing the preservation and transfer of more than 1,000 acres of critical habitat and watershed land to Hudson Highlands State Park;
- Increasing access to fresh food in Poughkeepsie's Northside neighborhoods with produce grown at Pershing Avenue Neighborhood Farm + Gardens;
- Conserving a 1,200-acre landscape in Dutchess County — one of the largest "land saves" in Scenic Hudson history;
- Achieving a major court victory that could doom the fossil-fuel Danskammer power plant, while advancing major solar projects critical for meeting New York's ambitious climate goals; and
- Continuing our fight for a Hudson River free of toxic PCBs, with clean water and restored natural resources.

All of these successes and others described in this report will make the Hudson Valley a better place for all to live, work, and play. We're improving people's physical and mental health, strengthening communities' resiliency to climate impacts, confronting environmental injustice in the region's river cities, and providing regional leadership in cooling down our warming planet, both by halting fossil-fuel projects and promoting renewable energy and regenerative agriculture.

Sojourner Truth said that "I will not allow my life's light to be determined by the darkness around me."

We could not have achieved these and many other victories without your generous support. With your continued investment and partnership, we can build on the momentum, assuring a brighter future for all who call this extraordinary region home. In the pages ahead, we've identified our goals for the future and steps we will take to achieve them. With your help, we will create new opportunities for people to savor the matchless beauty and bounty of the Hudson Valley.

With gratitude,



President



Board Chair



Protecting + Nurturing Land That Supports Life



Scenic Hudson boosts outdoor recreation opportunities, safeguards ecological and wildlife corridors, and enhances climate resiliency by expanding protected landscapes. In Dutchess County, we partnered with the Dutchess Land Conservancy on two critical additions. Adjacent to the popular **Dover Stone Church**, we jointly preserved 160 acres (far right) featuring a series of dramatic waterfalls cascading down a narrow ravine. (Dutchess County and the Town of Dover also collaborated in this transaction.) And in Washington and Stanford, a landowner generously donated a 1,250-acre landscape to the Dutchess Land Conservancy and a conservation easement on it to Scenic Hudson. The property, which includes productive farmland, wetlands, and one of the county's largest lakes, links to 12,000 contiguous acres of conserved land.



In the northern **Hudson Highlands**, Scenic Hudson partnered with the Hudson Highlands Land Trust to preserve 72 forested acres that directly connect the Town of East Fishkill and lands of the Fresh Air Fund with Clarence Fahnestock State Park. In addition to providing potential new opportunities for the community and Fresh Air campers — children from underserved New York City neighborhoods — to explore more of the Highlands' natural treasures, the land also links with Fishkill Farms (above), one of the region's most popular agritourism destinations.

In Lloyd, Ulster County, Scenic Hudson protected 23 acres on the summit of Illinois Mountain, adding to the 600 acres of previously conserved land on this ridge that sustains a wide variety of wildlife and poses an aerobic challenge for hikers and mountain bikers. And at the mountain's base, we conserved 66 acres along **Black Creek** (left). This acquisition supports creation of the John Burroughs Black Creek Trail, a planned nine-mile hiking/paddling route from our Black Creek Preserve to Illinois Mountain, and it could provide an opportunity for users of the adjoining Hudson Valley Rail Trail/Empire State Trail to take a creek-side ramble and make wildlife discoveries.



Protecting + Nurturing Land That Supports Life

Scenic Hudson's parks and preserves are models of environmental stewardship. Making **West Point Foundry Preserve** (right) in Cold Spring more inviting to native wildlife, volunteers have taken the lead in maintaining and expanding a pollinator garden that last year replaced a large swath of invasive plants. Increasing its potential to soak up floodwaters from Catskill Creek that could imperil downstream homes and businesses, we're restoring a floodplain forest at **Mawignack Preserve** in Catskill. And we constructed a 100-foot boardwalk (far right) through a wetland at our **High Banks Preserve** in Esopus, protecting sensitive species and creating what one newspaper called a "nature lover's oasis."

Boosting resiliency to flooding and reestablishing vital connections for aquatic wildlife at our **Esopus Meadows** and **Black Creek preserves** in Esopus, we're replacing undersized culverts with bridges. During this year's annual eel monitoring at Black Creek Preserve, volunteers (below) recorded more than 112,500 juvenile "glass" eels, indicating this is one of the estuary's hotspots for these migrants from the Atlantic Ocean.

Informing strategies to improve the water quality of Poughkeepsie's **Fall Kill Creek**, Scenic Hudson provided support for a project undertaken by Marist College students who surveyed the entire length of the stream in the city and pinpointed locations where pollution enters it. Cleaning up this Hudson River tributary that links the city's Northside neighborhoods is critical for making it a community asset for learning and health.





Goals for 2023

- Conserve 1,600 acres in 15 projects that advance climate resiliency and carbon sequestration, secure threatened landscapes, and connect communities to nature.
- Launch a forest inventory on lands owned by Scenic Hudson that focuses on carbon storage/sequestration and best management practices to maximize climate resiliency and biodiversity.
- Stop or scale back several large proposed land development projects in Ulster, Westchester, Rockland, and Rensselaer counties.

Fostering Community Connections That Unite People with Each Other + Nature

Taking the first step in transforming another former industrial site into a spectacular place to connect with the Hudson River, Scenic Hudson acquired six acres in **Athens**, Greene County. In addition to 1,000 feet of water frontage, this former fuel oil and road salt distribution facility contains an 8,000-square-foot warehouse that could be repurposed for community events. Increasing the acquisition's importance, it will add direct river frontage to the adjacent state boat launch.



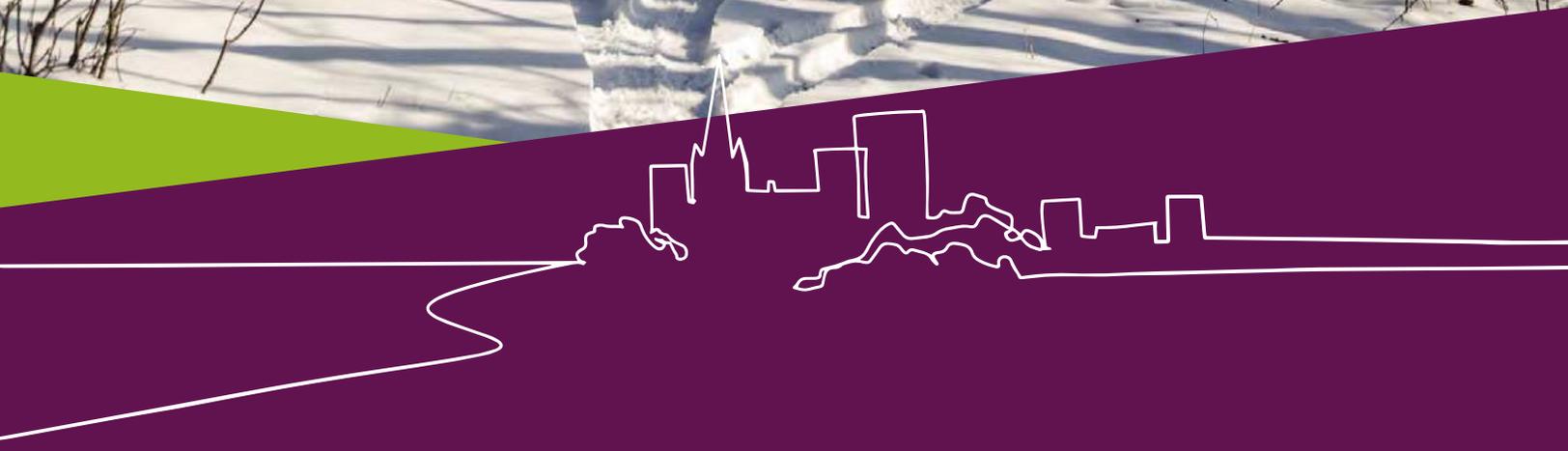
In Newburgh, Scenic Hudson engaged consultants to conduct a feasibility study for a linear park along Quassaick Creek that would span from its mouth on the Hudson River to Crystal Lake, where we helped restore a public park and create an urban farm. Hiking and biking trails from the park reach Snake Hill (far right), which Scenic Hudson protected. As well as connecting people to the waterway's natural beauty and wildlife, the **Quassaick Creek**

Greenway (rendering above) will provide an opportunity to share information about the region's Indigenous heritage (the creek's name is Algonquin for "stony brook") and early industries powered by its flow.



"It was my first time holding a fish in my hand." "I loved touching the water." "My favorite part was learning how to cast. It was a time I won't forget." These comments from elementary students in a recent Scenic Hudson education program (left) illustrate the sense of discovery and excitement generated during field trips to our parks' "outdoor classrooms." For many young people, the introduction to the Hudson and its wildlife leads to lifelong connections to the river.

Providing fresh food to people most in need, Scenic Hudson partnered with FeedHV to purchase more than 4,500 pounds of locally produced frozen meats, produce, and baked goods and donate them to nine food-assistance programs in four counties. The donation also aided local farmers who lacked freezer space and markets for their most recent harvest.





Fostering Community Connections That Unite People with Each Other + Nature

Engineering studies made possible with funding we helped secure from New York State and Westchester County will bring the **Bridge RiverWalk** — a “missing link” in the county’s 51-mile shoreline trail (above) — closer to shovel-ready status. When completed, this section of the RiverWalk beneath the Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge will make it easier for local residents lacking cars to reach essential services and grow opportunities for recreation, tourism, and long-distance commuting (thanks to a connection to the bridge’s shared-use path). It also will reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

Partnering with a local arts-education organization and hosting school field trips, we continue engaging Poughkeepsie residents about the importance of the **Fall Kill Creek**, which flows through the city’s Northside neighborhoods. We’re also developing an innovative strategy to create exciting new connections to the creek that will achieve multiple goals: increasing safe pedestrian and bike access to nearby rail trails and the Hudson River; facilitating non-motorized transportation to shops, businesses, and colleges from city and town neighborhoods; and improving the creek’s biodiversity.

On the **Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail**, a new 7.5-mile linear park between Cold Spring and Beacon being led by HHFT, Inc., an independent subsidiary of Scenic Hudson, we played an instrumental role in securing state funding to match monies raised by HHFT. It will advance construction of a dramatic bridge at Breakneck Ridge (rendering below) providing safe passage over the railroad tracks to the river’s edge. Construction in partnership with NY State Parks is slated to begin in 2023.



GET OUTDOORS 
& GET TOGETHER DAY



Long Dock Park

GET OUTDOORS 
& GET TOGETHER DAY



Long Dock Park

GET OUTDOORS 
& GET TOGETHER DAY



GET OUTDOORS
& GET TOGETHER DAY



Goals for 2023

- Program and host more free public events in our parks (above) that welcome all and celebrate the Hudson Valley's diversity.
- Establish paid internships for Poughkeepsie High School students focused on environmental education, community engagement, and job training.
- Secure meaningful community input on design and programming of public spaces at our future Poughkeepsie headquarters.

Promoting Responsible Renewable Energy Development

Scenic Hudson's expert comments helped assure another major setback for the proposed **Danskammer fossil-fuel plant** (right) in Orange County — a state Supreme Court decision upholding the Department of Environmental Conservation's right to deny an air quality permit for the plant for failing to comply with NY's climate law. Still, the fight over Danskammer is not over — which is why we continue supporting the DEC in the face of further legal challenges from the project's developer, and informing and engaging Newburgh residents, who would suffer the most from the proposed plant's air pollution.



Scenic Hudson leadership is ensuring that projects are providing renewable energy and protecting irreplaceable habitats, productive farmland, and iconic vistas. More than a dozen Hudson Valley communities are actively using our **How to Solar Now toolkit** to determine optimal win-win locations for new solar arrays (below). The toolkit also is gaining traction elsewhere in the state — from the Finger Lakes to the Adirondacks.

Committed to making Scenic Hudson parks more climate-friendly, we installed **electric vehicle charging stations** (far right) in Long Dock and Mount Beacon parks. At the same time, we have begun transitioning to battery-powered tools for park maintenance.





Goals for 2023

- Plan for a pilot project to responsibly site a community solar facility on a Scenic Hudson property.
- Evaluate use of current EV charging stations and develop plans for expanding them to other parks.





Advancing Climate Smart Agriculture at Multiple Levels

Scenic Hudson succeeded on several fronts this year in assuring that agriculture will provide natural climate solutions. Our advocacy in Albany helped secure an almost 300% increase in the 2022 state budget for **Climate Resilient Farming grants** and a 36% rise in funding for **Soil and Water Conservation Districts**. These resources will be critical for advancing agricultural practices such as no-till, cover cropping (above), and rotational grazing that make soils healthier, sequester carbon, and boost productivity. Meanwhile, Cornell Cooperative Extension hired its first-ever **Climate Resiliency Specialists**. Thanks to Scenic Hudson funding, one will work with valley farmers engaged or interested in adopting regenerative agricultural practices.

President Ned Sullivan, who serves on the Forestry and Agriculture Advisory Panel of the state's Climate Action Council, helped ensure that recommendations for promoting regenerative agriculture are included in the draft plan for achieving the goals of New York's climate law. And members of the **Northeast Carbon Alliance**, which Scenic Hudson founded, completed a draft federal policy agenda that will inform its advocacy to ensure 2023's federal Farm Bill makes a sizeable investment in climate-friendly operations.

Sarah Chase (right), co-owner of Chaseholm Farm in Pine Plains (Dutchess County), is committed to employing regenerative agricultural practices. Scenic Hudson partnered to protect the multigenerational dairy operation in 2018.



Goals for 2023

- Protect the future viability of Hudson Valley farms and climate through new conservation easements.
- Support farmers transitioning to regenerative practices.
- Advocate for equitable federal and state funding for farmers in the region.



Reshaping the Policy Landscape

Scenic Hudson's advocacy resulted in major victories that will lead to a healthier and safer Hudson Valley. In Albany, we helped secure a \$400-million **Environmental Protection Fund**, the largest in history, for investing in clean water, new parks, and conserving family farms.

We also campaigned successfully for a record \$200-million investment in the state's **parks capital fund**, vital for restoring and repairing popular but aging features in state parks and supporting the creation of new places to connect with nature, such as the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail.

In Washington, we worked with local Congress members to advance passage of vital legislation. The **New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act** would make the federal government a partner in protecting and restoring hundreds of miles of waterways flowing through the Hudson Valley and into New York Harbor, improving accessibility, climate resiliency, and economic opportunity. And the **Highlands Conservation Reauthorization Act** would ensure the continuation of highly successful efforts to preserve land, promote tourism, and protect wildlife and clean water across the four-state Highlands region.

Ramping up our campaign to end the damages **toxic PCB pollution** has caused — and will continue causing for generations without swift, substantive action — Scenic Hudson commissioned a groundbreaking expert report estimating the Natural Resource Damages General Electric should be obligated to pay to make the Hudson healthy again. The tab: \$11.4 billion. The report also concluded that it will take an additional \$10.7 billion for GE to clean up remaining contamination in the upper Hudson that threatens people, fish, and wildlife along the entire 200-mile Superfund site. Our hope is that this analysis will lead federal and state trustees overseeing the river's restoration to pursue a robust claim against GE to get the job done.





Goals for 2023

- Gain Congressional approval for the New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act and Highlands Conservation Reauthorization Act.
- Ensure the federal Farm Bill benefits Northeast states with greater resources for climate-smart agriculture.
- Advance New York's climate law and assure the valley receives state resources to make transformational changes in eliminating reliance on fossil fuels and increasing resiliency.



Engaging Communities Through Public Spaces That Are Inclusive, Safe, + Accessible

In April, more than 500 people celebrated the opening of **Sojourner Truth State Park** in Ulster County. In addition to exploring trails leading to dramatic cliff-top views, attendees enjoyed live music and dance, food, arts activities, and stirring remarks by Barbara Allen (right), sixth-generation granddaughter of the park's namesake. "She may have left, but her spirit is always here," Allen said of Sojourner Truth, the abolitionist and civil rights pioneer who escaped enslavement from a nearby farm. The park (far right), which includes one of the few stretches of the Empire State Trail running directly along the river, has become a go-to destination for local residents to enjoy recreation and relaxation. Scenic Hudson maintains the park, which we created in partnership with NY State Parks and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

Scenic Hudson worked with the City of Newburgh and community stakeholders to create a **Parks Inventory, Assessment and Improvement Guide** that not only catalogs all of the parks and open spaces in the city (including Crystal Lake, below), but assesses the conditions of each and recommends specific improvements to provide optimal health, safety, and economic benefits to the city and its residents.







Engaging Communities Through Public Spaces That Are Safe, Inclusive, + Accessible

*"I love what you've done with my backyard ...
My kids watch misery out the window with the distractions close to home.
It's life-changing to see Poughkeepsie growing green. Great job. Thanks."*

This email from a resident of Poughkeepsie's Northside vividly illustrates the importance of Scenic Hudson's work to create the **Pershing Avenue Neighborhood Farm + Gardens**, replacing a woodland whose seclusion invited illicit activity. In addition to expanding beds for community gardeners, 2022 marked the first year of operation for its urban farm. Under the stewardship of farm manager Nick Jackson (right), hundreds of pounds of just-picked fruits and vegetables have been supplied free of charge to neighbors lacking ready access to fresh produce. The site also has become a popular place for community events.

Scenic Hudson continues to partner in the City of Poughkeepsie's renovation of **Malcolm X** and **Pershing Avenue parks** on the Northside. And construction is underway on two additional projects that will increase access to nature for Northside residents — our **new headquarters**, which will include both outdoor and indoor spaces for community use, and the **Dutchess Urban Trail**, located on a 2.7-mile rail spur we acquired in 2019. The trail also will provide a safer and cheaper option for people on the Northside who don't own cars to reach shops and medical and educational facilities. And we're assisting Mental Health America Dutchess County in creating **Ellen's Place** (named after early education pioneer Ellen Hall) adjacent to Pershing Park. It will be the first park in the city featuring interactive learning and play areas that focus on exploring nature, which in turn promotes personal well-being by reducing stress, anger, and the risk of obesity.



Goals for 2023

- Complete construction of the riverfront area (rendering at left) of Sojourner Truth State Park.
- Complete the feasibility study for Newburgh's Quassaick Creek Greenway.
- Continue to make Scenic Hudson parks more inclusive and accessible through signage, communications, and events.





Enjoying a sunset stroll at Scenic Hudson Park at Peekskill Landing.

Scenic Hudson's total consolidated operating and capital budget during the year was \$19.81 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 FY22 – \$9.6 million – supported efforts to enhance the benefits valley residents and visitors receive from our work protecting land, creating parks, and halting threats to the region's natural beauty. 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.

The Scenic Hudson Land Trust

The land trust spent \$2.8 million in capital to secure conservation easements on farms and acquire ecologically important lands along the Hudson River that will provide outstanding new recreational opportunities for people who live, work, and play in the region. The land trust spent \$7.4 million for creating, maintaining, and improving our parks; for staff costs in monitoring conservation easements; and for working with partners to implement the Foodshed Conservation Plan and Hudson Valley Conservation Strategy. For every dollar of Scenic Hudson capital, we leveraged nearly 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 (\$172.3 million at year-end FY22), used to support land conservation activities; a board-designated fund for general operating expenses (\$20.2 million at year-end FY22); the Kathryn W. Davis Fund for Park Planning and Community Land Use (\$4.6 million at year-end FY22); and an Easement Enforcement Fund (\$0.9 million at year-end FY22). The assets are pooled in a diversified portfolio supervised by an investment committee. Total investment return was -18 percent for FY22. The board approved \$9.8 million in spending from the endowments for the year (5 percent of the past 12 quarters' rolling average value).

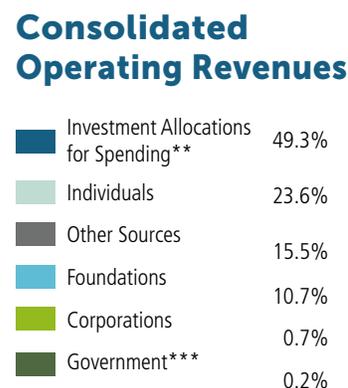
Although lands owned by the land trust are eligible for tax exemption, the land trust paid \$331,230 in property taxes and payments in lieu of taxes in FY22. In FY21, the land trust made \$391,382 of such payments. The land trust seeks relief from taxes at the first opportunity following acquisition of the property.

The Audit Committee engages Mayer Hoffman McCann CPAs to perform an independent annual audit, which is available on our website.

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2021
Land areas (at cost)	64,091	87,452
Cash and investments	239,618	261,408
Other assets	9,859	7,844
Total assets	313,568	356,704
Liabilities	2,429	6,903
Net assets	311,139	349,801
Total liabilities and net assets	313,568	356,704

*excludes HHFT [\$ = 000's]



* Including conservation easements ** The vast majority of investment allocation for spending supports land acquisition and parks creation.

*** The majority of revenues from government provide capital for farmland and open space preservation and parks.

The financial statements of Scenic Hudson, Inc., and its two supporting organizations – The Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Inc., and Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. – are consolidated for audit purposes. However, the financial statements for Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc., are excluded from this report as it operates as an independent subsidiary of Scenic Hudson. To learn more about Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc., and its plans to develop a linear park spanning 7.5 walkable, bikeable, and accessible miles between the Village of Cold Spring and City of Beacon, visit www.hhft.org.

Hudson River Stewardship Society

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View from Scenic Hudson's
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Jay Saunders
Jennison Associates, LLC

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Ned Sullivan

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*Non-board member

‡ Scenic Hudson Land Trust board member only



Scenic Hudson has preserved more than 1,300 acres in Stockport, Columbia County, including lands within the Stockport Flats unit of the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve, a popular destination for boating, fishing, birdwatching, and nature studies.



An event held last November at West Point Foundry Preserve celebrated its designation as a National Historic Landmark, the federal government's highest level of recognition for sites illustrating U.S. heritage.

The following are our staff members as of November 2022

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Senior Vice President

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Chief Finance and Operations Officer

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Executive Director, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

Pete Lopez
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Malorie Seeley-Sherwood
Executive Assistant to the Senior Vice President

Melissa Masson
Executive Assistant to the Chief Finance and Operations Officer

Beth Myers
Executive Assistant to the Executive Director of Land Programs and the Executive Director of Policy, Advocacy and Science

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Director of Land Use Advocacy

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Director of Environmental Advocacy and Legal Affairs

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Director of Communications

MJ Martin
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Director of Science, Climate and Stewardship

Rita D. Shaheen
Director of Parks and Community Engagement

Cari Watkins-Bates
Director of Land Conservation

Vacant
Director of River Cities Program

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Senior Parks Manager

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Vacant
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River Cities Program

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Lead for America Fellow with Scenic Hudson

Duane Martinez
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Scenic Hudson, Inc.

ScenicHudson.org

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