

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

**SCENIC
HUDSON
.ORG**



Building on 60 Years of Success

The most fitting way to celebrate Scenic Hudson's 60th anniversary, which we mark this year, is to keep moving forward with the same courage and conviction that motivated our founders in 1963.

They united to stop a massive power plant from defacing majestic Storm King Mountain in the Hudson Highlands, in the process igniting America's modern grassroots environmental movement.

Building on their legacy, Scenic Hudson has gone on to protect 50,000+ acres of astonishing natural beauty, conserve 140+ family farms, create or enhance 65+ places to connect with the outdoors, and transform contaminated urban waterfronts into spectacular riverfront destinations.

Today, sustained by the generosity of so many — including you — and an ever-growing corps of partners, we continue adding to these accomplishments. In the last year, Scenic Hudson:

- **Conserved more than 1,200 acres**, including fields and orchards on family farms that supply fresh produce to local, regional, and New York City markets.
- **Created one of the longest public waterfronts in the valley** by protecting 180 acres adjacent to Sojourner Truth State Park (whose land we preserved in 2019).
- **Helped assure New York's green future** by playing a leading advocacy role in securing passage of the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act.
- **Developed new trails for recreation and car-free transportation, revitalized parks, and supported urban farming** in the River Cities of Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, and Kingston.

In addition to these achievements, Scenic Hudson strengthened our leadership in confronting a warming climate and our commitment to ensuring all people benefit from our work.

Scenic Hudson's founders were aware they faced an uphill battle to protect Storm King, but they persevered and prevailed. Likewise, we know that reaching our goal — making this magnificent valley a healthier and safer place for *everyone* to live, work, and play — will take considerable time and energy.

We're committed to the effort — it's part of Scenic Hudson's DNA — and we're confident that with your support, we *will* succeed.

President

Board Chair



Protecting + Nurturing Land That Supports Life

The larger a natural area, the greater its benefits to people and wildlife. Scenic Hudson made great strides this year to expand conserved landscapes.

Adjacent to Sojourner Truth State Park (above) in Ulster County, we protected 180 acres — including a **mile of Hudson Riverfront**. Its diverse habitats not only sustain many imperiled species but will allow wildlife to migrate inland as sea levels rise. It also offers the potential to enhance recreation for underserved residents of the City of Kingston and Town of Ulster, as well as for visitors who drive the tourism economies of these communities. When combined with the 520-acre state park (whose land Scenic Hudson protected in 2019), this would create one of the longest stretches of publicly accessible riverfront in the Hudson Valley.

In Lloyd, also in Ulster County, Scenic Hudson received a gift (via the Wallkill Valley Land Trust) of **100 acres of habitat-rich forest and wetlands** adjacent to the Hudson Valley Rail Trail. A key link between Black Creek and Illinois Mountain, this site will enhance the future 11-mile John Burroughs Black Creek Trail and increase opportunities for outdoor fun in a state-designated Environmental Justice Area, a community most adversely affected by existing environmental hazards. Added to 1,400 acres of surrounding protected lands, it also helps conserve important wildlife migration pathways.

Across the river in Gallatin, Columbia County (right), **126 acres of productive farmland and woods** will always be available for agriculture and part of a critical link in a chain of habitats connecting the Catskills to the Berkshires. This corridor not only supports the annual migration of wildlife, but will play a vital role in providing new habitat for species forced out of lands impacted by a changing climate.





Scenic Hudson took two innovative steps to halt the conversion of productive farmland to potential non-agricultural uses in Kerhonkson, Ulster County. For the first time we exercised our right to match the sale price on lands we had conserved via easement. Instead of non-farmers, the **61 acres of high-quality soils** now belong to adjacent Kelder's Farm (above and right), an agritourism mainstay. Another transaction with the Kelder family ensures the remaining 95 acres on their farm can only be sold at their agricultural value, making the land permanently affordable for future farmers.

Two magnificent properties at risk of development in a fast-moving real estate market were protected by local land trust partners thanks to grants from the Scenic Hudson Climate Resilience and Environmental Justice Fund, established to accelerate the pace and scale of climate preparedness and environmental justice throughout the valley. In Rensselaer County, the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA) conserved **519 wooded acres within the state's fifth-largest unfragmented forest**. "Scenic Hudson's grant filled a significant funding gap for this great project," said RPA Executive Director Jim Bonesteel. In Dutchess County, our grant supported the Open Space Institute's protection of **117 acres adjacent to 830-acre West Mountain State Forest**.

Expanding our restoration of a floodplain forest at Mawignack Preserve in Catskill, we **planted 200 native trees** and began a long-term project to remove invasive knotweed along the stretch of Catskill Creek that flows through the site. This work not only provides new habitat but increases the land's potential to soak up floodwaters from the creek that could imperil downstream homes and businesses. In Ulster County we worked with a certified forester to create a management plan for three of our preserves that will help guide our work in **enhancing resiliency, biodiversity, and carbon storage and sequestration**.



2024 GOALS:

- Conserve 1,500 acres advancing federal and state commitments to conserve 30% of open land by 2030
- Collaborate with affordable housing groups on projects advancing joint goals
- Plant 600 additional native trees at Mawignack Preserve





Fostering Community Connections That Connect People with Each Other + Nature

Residents of Poughkeepsie’s Northside neighborhoods have two “new” parks — **exciting places for healthy recreation, connecting with nature, and coming together** — thanks to a partnership spearheaded by Scenic Hudson. Both Malcolm X and Pershing parks had suffered from years of deferred maintenance, and revitalizing them was a community priority. Our collaboration with the city, New City Parks, MASS Design Group, and Nubian Directions has transformed them into safe and welcoming spaces (above and right). Refurbished basketball courts and new walking paths, playground equipment, and lots of tables and benches invite people of all ages to spend time outdoors. The success at Malcolm X Park builds on efforts going back to the mid-2010s by local groups like the Hudson Valley ReEntry Network to adopt the park and provide the care it needed.

A shaded community pavilion, plaza-like gathering space, and resurfaced fishing platform offer new ways to experience the Hudson River at the **recently completed waterfront destination** at Sojourner Truth State Park (bottom left, facing page). Scenic Hudson; the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission partnered to provide these ADA-compliant features, accessible from pathways off the Hudson River Brickyard Trail/Empire State Trail.

Building on our track record for **protecting and connecting communities to their natural treasures**, Scenic Hudson commenced collaborative planning for two new parks — along the riverfront in Athens, Greene County, and amid the Hudson Highlands in Highland Falls, Orange County. And our newly released Hudson River Access Plan offers the **most complete survey ever** of potential future places to enhance opportunities for fishing, boating and paddling, and other water-based activities.





We also made excellent progress on exciting trail projects:

In Poughkeepsie, phase one of the Northside Line — an urban trail created by Dutchess County on a former railbed protected by Scenic Hudson — is now partially open, heading north from the Dutchess Rail Trail and Walkway Over the Hudson (right). Once fully realized, it will provide **car-free connections** from the city to shops, MidHudson Regional Hospital, and Marist College in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

Federal, state, and county funding we helped secure for environmental review and project design of the Westchester RiverWalk Connection brings this project closer to shovel-ready status. It will fill in the gap beneath the Cuomo Bridge and provide a link to the span’s shared-use path, **enhancing opportunities for non-motorized commuting and creating safer transportation** for local residents without cars (rendering above).

Major improvements at the popular Breakneck Ridge trailhead enhance safety for visitors and trail stewards while addressing erosion and protecting fragile habitat. It’s the latest success in creating the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, the linear park between Cold Spring and Beacon being led by Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. (an independent subsidiary of Scenic Hudson). Also this year, we conserved a critical three-acre property through which the trail will pass.

Suggestions from Newburgh and New Windsor residents who attended public input sessions convened by Scenic Hudson informed the feasibility study for the Quassaick Creek Greenway. It provides a blueprint for a public trail along this Hudson River tributary that will **connect neighborhoods to nature and each other** (below).



2024 GOALS:

- Commence work on a strategy for the Fall Kill Blueway — knitting together a series of locations and shared-use paths along the creek flowing through Poughkeepsie’s Northside neighborhoods
- Construct a section of the John Burroughs Black Creek Trail connecting Illinois Mountain with the Empire State Trail
- Begin designing and securing land access to advance the Quassaick Creek Greenway





Promoting Responsible Renewable Energy Development

Committed to accelerating the deployment of clean energy, Scenic Hudson played a key advisory role in drafting the Smart Integrative Tools for Energy Development (SITED) Act, passed by both houses of the state Legislature this year. It calls for the creation of an online mapping tool that will **help local governments to pinpoint areas best (and worst) suited for solar arrays** and other renewable projects. It was inspired by Scenic Hudson’s solar mapping tool, which more than a dozen valley communities have used to secure win-win benefits — providing emissions-free power and protecting irreplaceable habitats, productive farmland, and iconic vistas. The legislation awaits Gov. Hochul’s signature.

In a **victory for clean air and a climate-smart future**, Danskammer Energy has withdrawn its challenge to the denial of state permits required to construct a new fracked-gas power plant on the Hudson River in Orange County. If built as proposed,

the plant would emit nearly two million tons of carbon per year. Along with failing to comply with New York’s climate law, it would have especially harmful impacts on nearby City of Newburgh residents, who already suffer from some of the state’s highest asthma rates. Danskammer Energy also requested a one-year pause in permit proceedings.

Helping to ensure that people who suffer the most from climate impacts have a voice in creating solutions, Scenic Hudson experts helped draft a new Inclusive Community Engagement Primer for the state’s Climate Smart Communities program, which helps local governments take steps to address the climate crisis. The primer’s goal is to “create community buy-in for climate and environmental initiatives in addition to **providing a forum to address past environmental harms.**”

And supporting an **old but “new” climate solution**, Scenic Hudson is welcoming the merchant schooner *Apollonia* to dock at our Long Dock Park (above) and make deliveries and pickups in downtown Beacon. Powered solely by wind and used vegetable oil, the ship typically travels 260 nautical miles with no more than 90 minutes of engine use. Since 2020, it has hauled more than 110,000 lbs. of goods — everything from locally produced pasta, hot sauce, pumpkins, maple syrup, and malted barley — to businesses and restaurants between the City of Hudson and New York City. On land, the goods reach their destination via cargo bicycle.



2024 GOALS:

- Install a solar array on the shade pavilion at Long Dock Park
- Continue replacing park management power tools reliant on fossil fuels with battery-operated equipment
- Continue working to ensure that new renewable energy projects maximize benefits to host communities and minimize impacts on high-quality farmland, forests, and wetlands



Advancing Climate Smart Agriculture at Multiple Levels

Scenic Hudson protected a farm in our nascent Regenerative Agriculture Demonstration Area in Ulster County’s Rondout Valley. We also provided financial assistance to two additional farms, one in the Rondout Valley and another in the Roeliff Jansen Kill watershed in Columbia County. Totalling more than 220 acres, these farms will highlight how **regenerative farming practices can help combat climate change while making soils healthier and more productive**. At the Ulster County farm, 700 trees recently planted along a stream not only buffer fields from flooding, but eventually could provide opportunities for agroforestry — the climate-friendly practice of integrating trees and agriculture.

The Northeast Carbon Alliance (NECA), which Scenic Hudson founded to **advance natural climate solutions**, held a high-profile listening session with state and federal agricultural leaders, farmers (including urban farmers), scientists, and policy leaders. Its goal was to strengthen the voice of New York and surrounding states in shaping the 2023 federal Farm Bill to promote soil health and equal access to federal resources for all (see page 16). Participants included the agriculture commissioners of New York and Maine as well as an undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In September, NECA brought together bipartisan members of the valley’s Congressional delegation with local farmers and other agricultural stakeholders for a Farm Bill Gathering (above) at Stone Ridge Orchard (below) in Ulster County. Along with a roundtable discussion where farmers **stressed the need to enhance federal support** to confront the growing unpredictability of their operations, the result of more intense climate impacts, attendees got a firsthand look at regenerative agricultural practices used by the host farmer to sequester carbon and boost productivity.



2024 GOALS:

- Complete two new climate-smart agriculture demonstration projects and hold two regenerative agriculture community events for farmers
- Sustain our relationship with Cornell University to provide technical assistance on climate-resilient agriculture for valley farmers



Reshaping the Policy Landscape

Building upon last November’s passage of the \$4.2-billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act — a campaign in which Scenic Hudson committed significant time and financial resources — we advocated successfully to maintain historic levels of funding in the 2023 state budget for the Environmental Protection Fund, which invests in **clean water, new parks, and conserving family farms**.

Currently, Scenic Hudson is strongly engaged in assuring the pending U.S. Farm Bill — the nation’s prime source of funding to conserve farmland and keep agriculture viable — meets the needs of farmers in the Northeast (like the owners of Dutch Hollow Farm, above). One of our chief goals is **expanding conservation programs to include small farms and underrepresented farmers**. We’re also advocating for funds to enhance urban farms and community gardens, and strong support for technical service providers, farmers, and other landowners to promote soil health and regenerative practices.

In our campaign for a **clean, safe Hudson River**, we continue urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency overseeing the cleanup of toxic PCBs to start laying the groundwork for a robust remediation plan in the 140-mile stretch of the river between Troy and Manhattan, where these chemicals continue impacting the health of families reliant on the river’s fish for sustenance. We’re also seeking broader representation of environmental justice organizations from the lower Hudson on the Community Advisory Group, the chief avenue for the public to express concerns about this continuing threat to people, wildlife, and a thriving economy.

Increasing opportunities for the Ulster County towns of Gardiner and Marbletown to protect lands and waters that make them special, we helped spur voters’ passage of Community Preservation Funds. They will invest money accrued from a small tax on the purchase of high-end real estate in **new parks and trails, conserving family farms, and other projects that benefit all residents**.

To **grow the corps of grassroots partners** helping Scenic Hudson halt ongoing threats to the valley’s natural beauty and health, we created a new website — defendthevalley.org. It provides information about all of our campaigns and offers a one-click way for people to get involved in making a difference.

2024 GOALS:

- Advocate for an EPA Five-Year Review determining the PCB cleanup is “not protective” of human health and the environment and consideration of further cleanup
- Provide support enabling advocates in Kingston and Chatham to pass Community Preservation Funds



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

Throughout the year, Scenic Hudson planned activities that brought people together to **experience the beauty and bounty of natural treasures in their “backyards.”** A neighborhood Harvest Fest last October celebrated the makeover of Pershing Park and the first successful growing season at the adjacent urban farm Scenic Hudson collaborated to create. There was much cause for joy — the park’s new features are a promising addition to the neighborhood, a badly needed facelift to an important local park, while the farm supplied 400 pounds of fresh produce free of charge to Northside families (above). All signs point to a comparable distribution of nutritious fruits and vegetables in 2023.

Nearly 1,000 people attended Scenic Hudson’s Community Spring Fest at Sojourner Truth State Park in May. They came to hear live musical performances, sample an international array of food from local vendors, shimmy to a DJ’s dance party, and enjoy kid-friendly games and activities. The park more than lived up to its potential as a **gathering place for local residents**, a need expressed by many participants in community information sessions held prior to its development. The event also marked the inauguration of the Sojourner Truth Pop-Up Trail (right). Created by Scenic Hudson, this traveling exhibit provides opportunities to **connect even more people** to Truth’s remarkable life and legacy.





Fresh on the heels of a ribbon-cutting to mark the revitalization of Poughkeepsie’s Malcolm X Park, more than 100 people came out to “kick its tires” by **enjoying an afternoon of family-friendly activities** — food, music, lawn games, face-painting, a pickup basketball game, and wildlife exploration. Since then, other community events have blossomed in the park, including basketball workshops and tournaments as well as community celebrations and reunions.

Scenic Hudson’s Farmland Cycling Tour — a highlight of fall for many people in the valley — made a welcome return appearance in 2022. Over 400 participants “hit the road” to pedal past farms and orchards conserved by Scenic Hudson and our partners. Back at Poets’ Walk Park, cyclists **learned about our work and ways they can partner** in efforts to make the region an even better place to live, work, play, and create.



2024 GOALS:

- Make substantial progress on construction of improvements at the 12-acre addition to Black Creek Preserve
- Reinvigorate work to plant additional street trees in Newburgh and explore opportunities to expand urban greening programs in Poughkeepsie and Kingston





Scenic Hudson’s total consolidated operating and capital budget during the year was \$19.2 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 FY23 – \$10.6 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 \$5.8 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 \$2.8 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. On average, for every dollar of Scenic Hudson capital, we leverage 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 (\$180.2 million at year-end FY23), used to support land conservation activities; a board-designated fund for general operating expenses (\$21.6 million at year-end FY23); the Kathryn W. Davis Fund for Park Planning and Community Land Use (\$4.9 million at year-end FY23); and an Easement Enforcement Fund (\$0.9 million at year-end FY23). The assets are pooled in a diversified portfolio supervised by an investment committee. Total investment return was 11.8 percent for FY22. The board approved \$10.5 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, the land trust paid \$124,001 in property taxes and payments in lieu of taxes in FY23. In FY22, the land trust made \$331,230 of such payments. The land trust seeks relief from taxes at the first opportunity following acquisition of the property.

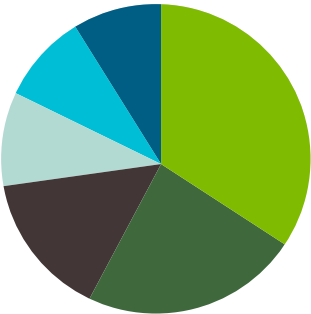
The Audit Committee engages Mayer Hoffman McCann CPAs to perform an independent annual audit, which is available on our website.

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2023**
Land areas (at cost)	64,091	64,601
Cash and investments	239,618	262,319
Other assets	9,859	15,378
Total assets	313,568	342,298
Liabilities	2,429	7,842
Net assets	311,139	334,456
Total liabilities and net assets	313,568	342,298

excludes HHFT (\$ = 000's) **unaudited

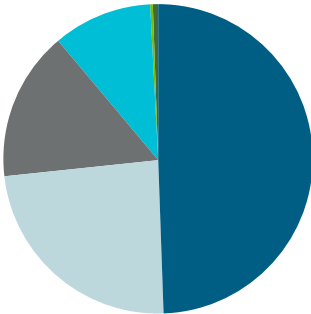
Consolidated Operating Expenses



Land Conservation*	33.7%
Science, Parks & Community Engagement (incl. River Cities)	23.6%
Policy, Advocacy & Outreach	16.4%
Administration	9.1%
Communications	8.7%
Fundraising	8.5%

Consolidated Operating Revenues

Investment Allocations for Spending**	49.6%
Individuals	24.0%
Other Sources	15.3%
Foundations	10.5%
Corporations	0.3%
Government***	0.3%



* 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](#)

Individuals who have included Scenic Hudson in their Estate or long-term financial plans

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Patricia Carroll-Mathes
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[2023 Contributors](#)

Individuals who made gifts between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023

Gifts of \$500,000 and above

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The Farm Fresh Food Grantmaking Program
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Ned and Tara Sullivan
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Gifts of \$3,000-\$4,999

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Heather and Derrick Hopkins
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Ambassador Nicholas Platt
Leslie Richards-Yellen and David Yellen
RUPCO
Vote Yes Gardiner Committee For Open
Space, Farmland and Clean Water
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Gifts of \$2,500-\$2,999

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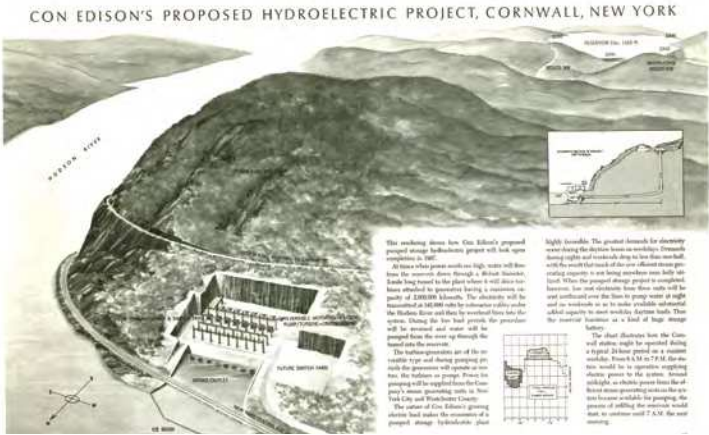
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Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation
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Scenic Hudson at 60



SH@60: 1963

Scenic Hudson is founded to lead the campaign against construction of a proposed hydroelectric plant on iconic Storm King Mountain in the Hudson Highlands

SH@60: 1965

A federal court ruling, known as Scenic Hudson decision, gives people the right to sue to protect cherished lands and waters. Many consider it the birth of the modern grassroots environmental movement

SH@60: 1980

Scenic Hudson Board Chair Frances Reese signs the agreement leading to Storm King's permanent protection

SH@60: 1990

Opening of Lighthouse Park, Scenic Hudson's first public park, on the Esopus waterfront. Now owned by the town, it is adjacent to our Esopus Meadows Preserve

SH@60: 1992

To preserve vistas integral to the landscape design of Olana, artist Frederic Church's masterpiece, Scenic Hudson begins an initiative to conserve lands within its viewshed. To date, we and partners have protected 3,000+ acres

SH@60: 1995

Assuring public access to spectacular views from Mount Beacon, Scenic Hudson acquires land on its flank and summit

SH@60: 1996

Opening of Poets' Walk Park, one of Scenic Hudson's most popular natural areas, whose rustic pavilion is an Instagram favorite



SH@60: 1998

Scenic Hudson commences an initiative to conserve the region's productive farmland. 20,000+ acres on 140+ family farms and orchards have been protected to date



SH@60: 2001

Opening of Scenic Hudson Park at Irvington, our first success in transforming a contaminated former industrial site into a community asset



SH@60: 2005

NYS denies permits to build the massive St. Lawrence Cement plant on Hudson's riverfront, successfully ending Scenic Hudson's collaborative campaign to stop its construction



SH@60: 2007

334 acres in Hyde Park protected by Scenic Hudson to prevent construction of a big-box store are transferred to the National Park Service, providing public access to FDR's historic Farm Lane



SH@60: 2009

General Electric begins a six-year dredging project to remove soils contaminated with toxic PCBs from the Hudson River, a milestone in Scenic Hudson's ongoing campaign to restore the river's health



SH@60: 2009

Opening of Walkway Over the Hudson, to which Scenic Hudson provided leadership financial support. Half a million visitors cross the span annually



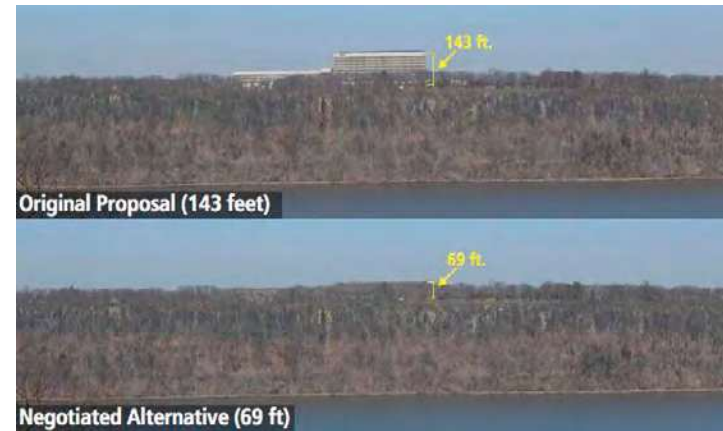
SH@60: 2011

Addition of sustainable features at Scenic Hudson's Long Dock Park transforms this former rail terminal and junkyard in Beacon into an exciting riverfront destination



SH@60: 2012

The Saw Mill River, which had flowed underground for 80 years, becomes the focal point in a new Yonkers park that replaces a parking lot. Scenic Hudson first envisioned plans to "daylight" this Hudson River tributary



SH@60: 2015

An agreement forged by Scenic Hudson and partners with LG Electronics lowers the height of the company's planned NJ headquarters, preserving magnificent Palisades views



SH@60: 2018

In another great collaborative victory spearheaded by Scenic Hudson, the U.S. Coast Guard scuttles its proposal to establish new Hudson River barge anchorages, ending threats to communities' drinking water supplies and fragile aquatic habitats



SH@60: 2018

Completing one of the largest land saves in our history, Scenic Hudson protects 1,178 acres between Breakneck Ridge and Mount Beacon in the Hudson Highlands



SH@60: 2021

Remains of the 19th-century West Point Foundry, located on land Scenic Hudson protected to prevent construction of a hotel, are designated a National Historic Landmark



SH@60: 2022

500+ people celebrate the opening of Sojourner Truth State Park. Scenic Hudson protected the 500-acre former industrial site and partnered with NY State Parks to create the first state park in the City of Kingston

Board of Directors

The following board members served during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023

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