WELCOMING NEW CONSERVATION STAFF

MHLC Hires First Conservation Director in 25 Years

Our 25th anniversary year has been a busy one. In May, we opened the Strawberry Fields Nature Preserve in Amsterdam, and on October 21st, we will celebrate the grand opening of the Fox Preserve in Colonie (see page 5). We've expanded our outreach with new projects like the Capital Region Nature Passport and a busy schedule of events for nature lovers of all ages. Yet the biggest focus of this special year has been a bit more behind-the-scenes: we are expanding our team at the MHLC office. In 2017, we’ve welcomed two women whose work increases our capacity to protect and steward the lands of the Capital Region.

With these new staff members, we are accelerating and expanding our land protection work. We prioritize several focal conservation areas in our work, including those identified in New York State’s Open Space Plan as areas of significance: the Helderberg Escarpment, the Albany Pine Bush, Hoffman’s Fault, and the Hudson and Mohawk River corridors. These conservation areas, along with criteria such as scenic vistas, ecologic resources, natural corridors, and working landscapes, guide our work. Potential land projects are reviewed by Sarah Walsh, our new Conservation Director (and the first Conservation Director in MHLC history), who helps Executive Director Mark King determine whether properties align with the Conservancy’s acquisition policy. For each potential acquisition, Sarah assesses the property’s location and natural resources, evaluating how it would fit within our portfolio of conservation lands. This process includes property visits to catalog habitat types and significant ecological resources.

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It is a busy 25th anniversary year for MHLC. Through the outstanding efforts of our 25th anniversary committee, led by outgoing board member Dan Lewis, we’ve had a wonderful series of successful events. Our biggest event thusfar was the wonderful celebration at the new Thacher Park Visitor Center in September. As you’ll read, another big success this year is the addition of two new staff members. Through the addition of Sarah Walsh as Conservation Director, we are advancing more than 1,000 acres of new projects. The stewardship of our preserves and easements is under the very capable hands of Sawyer Cresap, our new Stewardship and Volunteer Coordinator. When then-Board Chair Lisa Evans hired me for the Executive Director position in 2013, she made it clear that adding capable staff was our highest priority. I know Lisa would be proud of the staff investment MHLC is making, an investment which will move us to new heights in the next 25 years.

**Conservation Staff**

Sarah works with landowners to provide land protection options which meet both landowner and MHLC conservation objectives. She also drafts conservation easements, which are legal agreements made between a landowner and MHLC to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on a property. Sawyer Cresap is MHLC’s new Stewardship and Volunteer Coordinator. Before we acquire a parcel of land, or begin drafting a conservation easement agreement with a landowner, Sawyer helps assess the stewardship responsibilities involved in tackling the new project. She works closely with landowners who do have conservation easements on their property to ensure that easement restrictions are upheld.

Sarah Walsh is a native of the Capital Region and has developed her skills in stewardship and volunteer engagement through service with AmeriCorps and many of its land trust and municipal partners throughout New England. Outside of her work for MHLC, she enjoys long-distance running, oil painting, and rollerblading along the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail.

Sarah Walsh inspects MHLC lands.

Sawyer also manages our preserves and trails and guides the incredible network of dedicated volunteers who help with stewardship and events.

With the addition of these two new staff members to our network of supporters and volunteers, we enter our second quarter-century with an unprecedented ability to conserve the lands of the Capital Region. Please help us in welcoming Sarah and Sawyer to the MHLC community!

**Sarah Walsh** comes to us with nearly ten years of experience in non-profit program development and land protection in the Thousand Islands and Capital Region. Her experience with trail building, wildlife habitat connectivity, and science-based conservation development will elevate our work protecting key conservation areas between the Adirondacks and Catskill Mountains. Sarah is also working to increase and improve the ways in which we incorporate climate change science and climate resiliency planning into our conservation work. During her free time, Sarah enjoys birdwatching, hiking, mountain biking, and backcountry skiing.

**Sawyer Cresap** is a native of the Capital Region and has developed her skills in stewardship and volunteer engagement through service with AmeriCorps and many of its land trust and municipal partners throughout New England. Outside of her work for MHLC, she enjoys long-distance running, oil painting, and rollerblading along the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail.
Volunteer Profile: Ava DeSantis
Local Student Paints Faces to Support Conservation

Ava DeSantis, a junior at the Doane Stuart School in Rensselaer, NY, spent her Saturday mornings this summer painting faces at the Delmar Farmers Market. Ava donated 100% of her proceeds to the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy! Learn more about this incredible teen and how she supports conservation with her creativity.

How did you learn to face paint? I learned to face paint from my mom. We painted faces together at the Troy Night Out every summer when I was younger. She also worked at the Troy Sidewalk Art competition; I would compete and she would paint faces.

Where do you do your face painting? I face painted at the Delmar Farmers Market for four hours every Saturday. I was joined every day by a friend: Megan Arnason, a friend and Bethlehem High School student, and Ehden Medina, a friend and fellow Doane Stuart student, helped me a lot. In total, I was able to raise over $600.

What do you like best about volunteering as a face painter? I really enjoy being able to make a kid's day with a piece of art that's only theirs. It's great to connect with people over a mutual care for the environment. I met a lot of people who were either already involved with the Conservancy or were excited to hear about it and and how they can help.

Why did you choose to donate your proceeds from face painting to local conservation? Supporting local organizations can make a big difference in your community, and ultimately the world. Starting the conversation in your community can raise the awareness necessary to make change.

What are your future plans for school, work, and volunteering? I plan to continue into law school after high school and college and a possible career in environmental law. I will continue to volunteer with environmental causes, and I intend to face paint for the Conservancy again next summer.

Remembering Lisa Evans

On June 20, 2017, the Capital Region lost a passionate and devoted supporter of health care, conservation, the arts, women's rights, and programs for children, families and the disadvantaged. On this day Lisa Evans—business owner, philanthropist, and MHLC Board Member—passed away at her home after a courageous battle with cancer.

Lisa joined the Conservancy’s Board of Directors in 2008, after supporting the organization for more than 10 years prior. During her time on the board, Lisa wholeheartedly advocated for MHLC’s conservation efforts and spoke fervently about the threat of development and loss of open space in the region. She immersed herself in the workings of the board and gave generously of her time and talents, serving as a committee chair for our fundraising efforts and our 25th Anniversary celebration, as well as serving as Board Chair from 2012-2015.

It is no coincidence that the exponential growth of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy of recent years coincided with Lisa's tenure as Board Chair. Lisa’s inspirational and tenacious efforts on behalf of MHLC sparked our growth and fueled our efforts. As a lifelong resident and beloved business leader, Lisa put her talents to use guiding staff, making connections to the Capital Region community, recruiting others to the cause, and finding funders to support these efforts. Her leadership, gentle good humor, and can-do attitude inspired confidence in our success, if in some cases, it was only because she wouldn't accept anything but. She is sorely missed.
In 2016, MHLC received a generous donation from George Martin, a retired Mathematics Professor from the University at Albany. He donated 32 acres of land along the Helderberg Escarpment on Route 157, also known as Thatcher Park Road. This donation connects to MHLC’s Guthrie Property and creates a continuous, uninterrupted view of the Escarpment, preserving the integrity of this iconic view.

George planned his donation over many years. As a long-term supporter of MHLC, George was very familiar with our focus on the Helderberg Escarpment, a location significant due to its geology, biological diversity and stunning profile from the Hudson Valley.

George’s conservation commitment was shared by his late wife, Dr. Meg Stewart, a renowned herpetologist whose primary subject was coqui, a tiny Puerto Rican frog. Her work led her to the discovery and naming of a new species of frog in Africa, Stewart’s puddle frog, and to an honorary doctorate from the University of Mayaguez in 1996. Suffice it to say, this couple worked continuously to support conservation.

George and Meg’s home on Beaver Dam Road in the Town of New Scotland was also a testament to their conservation-mindedness. The home, purchased in the 1970’s, is modest and incorporated into the landscape. The property itself contains iconic karst and limestone outcroppings and dense forest. With significant road frontage, this gift has enabled MHLC to preserve both sides of the road along Route 157, creating an important habitat corridor.

This fall, MHLC subdivided the property and sold the house to generate funds which will go right back into stewardship and land preservation. The home was purchased by a young couple with conservation roots who will continue the legacy that George and Meg began. The remaining acreage is now called the George Martin Preserve and will serve as conservation lands for MHLC. George and Meg Stewart, through this gift, have created a conservation legacy that MHLC is proud to carry forward for generations to come.

Ways to Give

You too can create a conservation legacy! MHLC makes giving easy, allowing you to create a legacy that reflects your values through a gift or charitable bequest of land. We also accept donations including: conservation easement donations; gifts of stock, mutual funds and charitable trusts; cash; retirement plan assets, and planned giving as part of your estate planning. To ensure your conservation legacy rings true to your wishes, contact our Development Director, Lea Montalto-Rook at lea@mohawkhudson.org.

Your support makes it possible for MHLC to protect important habitats and properties like the Martin Property. Together, we can protect the open spaces of the Capital Region for future generations—donate today!
Fox Preserve Grand Opening Continues 25th Celebration

2017 has been a whirlwind of activity for the MHLC community. With over twenty-five outdoor events scheduled throughout the year, we’ve welcomed new visitors to our preserves. Over 150 volunteers have joined us for eleven outdoor work days, creating new trails and improving our preserves. In May, we celebrated the grand opening of our first new preserve in 2017: the Strawberry Fields Nature Preserve in Amsterdam. On June 24, over 200 guests enjoyed live music from the Albany Symphony at the Daniel Conkling House in Rensselaerville. On July 22, guided hikes and bike rides brought together hundreds of outdoor enthusiasts across the Capital Region during our Summer Hike-a-Thon. And on September 14, over 230 guests participated in the biggest event of MHLC’s 25th anniversary: our Fall Fundraiser at the John Boyd Thacher State Park Visitor Center.

As we enter the early weeks of autumn, we invite you to join us for the final few months of our 25th anniversary, beginning with the grand opening of the Fox Preserve in Colonie on October 21st. This special event is free and includes guided tours and excellent birdwatching opportunities. The ceremony begins at 10 AM, and we expect to enjoy the peak autumn colors along the Mohawk River.

NEW NATURE PRESERVE:
The Fox Preserve in Colonie

Grand Opening: October 21st at 10 AM
Free Guided Tours
Scenic views of the Mohawk River
Access to the Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway
Hiking and Birdwatching

Register for free: mohawkhudson.org
VIEWPOINTS

Conservation Easements 101
A FREE WORKSHOP FOR LANDOWNERS
SCHEDULED FOR:
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1 TO 4 PM
SCHENECTADY, NY

Tour a passive solar house and meet with landowners who have conserved their land with MHLC.
All landowners are invited, and questions are welcomed.

YOU ARE INVITED:
SIGN UP TODAY!

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PROTECT MY LAND?

ARE THERE TAX BENEFITS?

DOES "CONSERVED FOREVER" REALLY MEAN FOREVER?

Photo of a view of the Catskills from an MHLC conservation easement property in Rensselaerville.

Sign up today!