



Mohonk Consultations

NUMBER 25 • 2015

LET'S TALK IT OVER AT MOHONK: A TRADITION OF CONNECTING PEOPLE THROUGH DIALOGUE

Increasing Our Local Food Security

Last November we hosted a full-day public conference to share viewpoints, current research and initiatives on sustaining and enhancing food production right here in the Hudson Valley. The focus was on these essentials: conserving land for agriculture, expanding regional farm produce and markets for it, supporting the existing and new generations of farmers, and making farmland affordable.

More than 110 participants: farmers, interns and representatives from land trusts, governments, agricultural businesses and nonprofits engaged in agriculture, education, health and food services, as well as local citizens joined in this exploration. A series of speakers, panels, Q&A sessions and round tables facilitated exchanges among all participants.

Keynote speaker, TODD ERLING, Executive Director of Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC) in Hudson NY, spoke on "Agriculture as Economic Development through Rural-Urban Partnerships." He has hands-on knowledge of the challenges to the Valley's agriculture on his own farm, while HVADC

applies practical economic development programs to keep Hudson Valley farmers in business. He emphasized the interconnected, reciprocal relations within our food system, from rural to urban sites, from farms and their farmers to markets, and all communities. He stressed that we can support our local food system by conscious choices we make daily as consumers.

Todd stated that 1910 -1987 saw a decline of 40 percent in agricultural production by area farms in NYS. But he affirmed that in the last 25 years, the same graph is statistically leveling off. "We're moving in the right direction".

Todd also noted:

- The Hudson Valley's 5,536 farms cover 898,000 acres, and provide an \$810 million gross economic impact.
- Farm acreage and the size of farms are declining as a whole, although their products' value is increasing.
- Local produce supply in the Hudson Valley is worth about \$96 million, while the unmet demand for produce is roughly \$197 million and creating a local produce demand of \$293 million. (cont'd on p. 4)



Straight Out of the Ground Farm offers CSA shares to its local community of Roxbury and to Brooklyn and Rockaway in Queens NY. Typical of many older farms in NYS it transitioned its produce from dairy to vegetables, chickens and expanded its markets. Photo by Jeff Crane

SAVE THESE DATES

Come to Mohonk Mountain House for these 2015 events. Advance reservations are required.

Spring Forum

The Challenges Facing Existing Family Farms

In collaboration with Rondout Valley Growers Association
Mohonk Mountain House Parlor
Sun April 12, 2015, 3 - 6 pm

Distinguished Achievement Award

Honoring Ann Guenther, Educator, Naturalist & Climate Change Activist
Mohonk Mountain House Parlor
Mon June 8, 2015, 5 - 8 pm

Autumn Conference

Conserving Open Space: Now What?

Co-sponsored by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Scenic Hudson and the Mohonk Preserve
Mohonk Mountain House Conference Center
Mon Nov. 9, 2015, 9 - 4 pm



**You are invited to
Mohonk Mountain House
for these
Mohonk Consultations
2015 Events**

Sunday, April 12, 3 - 6 pm, Spring Forum The Challenges Facing Existing Family Farms

This community public Forum at the Mohonk Mountain House Parlor will be offered in collaboration with the Rondout Valley Growers Assoc. The event will focus on competition and potential for collaboration among existing farms and with incoming new farmers, outside investors and others. What are the opportunities? What are the challenges?

Stay tuned to our Forum page at www.mohonk-consultations.org for more details as available. Registration will be \$20 Regular / \$10 Farmers & Students, available online at our website by March 1. Or you may register by mailing a check made out to 'Mohonk Consultations', designated for 'Spring 2015 Forum' to Mohonk Consultations, 1000 Mountain Rest Road, New Paltz NY 12561.



(L to R) Jacob Hooper, Jim, Cindy and Elias Barber represent their family's 5th and 6th generations to work Barber's Farm in Middleburgh NY, raising 80 fruits and vegetables, and seven varieties of potatoes. They offer year round markets in their farm stand, the Schenectady NY Greenmarket, and at three more locations in the warm months. In 2015 they will increase their offerings with a farm-based distillery making potato vodka. Photo courtesy of Barber's Farm.

Monday, June 8, 5 - 8 pm

2015 Distinguished Achievement Award Ceremony to Honor Ann Guenther, Educator, Naturalist and Climate Change Activist

Celebrate Ann Guenther as she is recognized with Mohonk Consultations' 2015 Distinguished Achievement Award. The ceremony and reception will be held in Mohonk Mountain House Parlor.

A naturalist and an environmental educator for over 20 years and now a climate change activist, Ann explains her journey: "I've been a nature lover all my life. Growing up half a block from Lake Michigan, I roamed the beaches and parks collecting various leaves, shells, worms and caterpillars."



Photo by Patty Matteson.

Ann began her work as an information specialist at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in NYC. "It was when those first pictures of the Earth from space were coming in that I began to share with people how beautiful and unique this planet is."

After moving to the Hudson Valley with her husband, Dan, she worked as a classroom teacher and environmental educator. In 2007 the New York State Outdoor Education Association presented Ann with their Outdoor Educator Award for "using the outdoors to enrich curriculum and interpret the natural world in a way that has expanded the environmental appreciation of children or adults."

She sees herself less as a teacher sharing information - and more as a bridge connecting people with nature. "So often we are [just] moving through the landscape," she reflected. "But when we stop at a tree, for example, we can begin to really see it and then, almost magically we become that tree. It's transforming."

Notably, Ann is a co-founder of the New Paltz Climate Action Coalition: "The group coalesced around the idea that because we love this planet and its people," she emphasized, "we need to DO something about climate change - not just watch."
(<http://www.newpaltzclimateaction.org>)

The Award program will be in Mohonk Mountain House Parlor and include a reception featuring light fare.

Monday, November 9, 9 am - 4 pm, Autumn Conference

Conserving Open Space: Now What?

Co-sponsored by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Scenic Hudson and the Mohonk Preserve.

Participants will include state and local officials, land managers, private landowners, conservation organizations, other stakeholders and the public. The goals are to:

- explore the challenges and opportunities for ensuring the long-term stewardship of lands owned for conservation or under perpetual easements
- examine other land conservation issues
- develop a shared vision for open space in the Mid-Hudson region.



Photo by Patty Matteson.

Please check our website for further details as available: www.mohonkconsultations.org

NOTEWORTHY



2015
International
Year of Soils

2015 - United Nations International Year of Soils

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the 2015 initiative "aims to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions." Mohonk Consultations supports this initiative with our continuing work on achieving local food security and on land stewardship.

The FAO's steering committee says, "We need soils to produce food, give clothes and build homes. Soils also store and filter water, recycle nutrients, and create a barrier against floods. . . . The area of fertile soils covering the world's surface is limited. Deforestation, bad agricultural practices and pollution can cause soil degradation and erosion. Soils are also trapped underground when cities keep growing in size and more buildings are made."

For more information, see <http://www.fao.org/soils-2015/en/>



MOHONK CONSULTATIONS

The purpose of Mohonk Consultations is to bring about a clearer understanding of the interrelationships of all life on earth, emphasize the need for sustainable use of all the earth's resources, including humans, and support the development of practical means to do so.

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The Farmers' Experience Panel

LINDSEY SHUTE, co-owner with her husband of Hearty Roots Community Farm in Clermont NY and a co-founder of the National Young Farmers Coalition stated, "Farm land in this region is priced way beyond what a farmer can afford based on what they can produce on their land which is a key thing to keep in mind. And unless you can bring those two things into line where a farmer can make a [living] and be able to own land, then we have little hope for achieving local food security."

PETE FERRANTE has continued his parents' farming legacy at Wallkill View Farm in New Paltz NY for the last 35 years in partnership with his brothers. His daughter is the third generation to take part in managing the farm. He echoed Todd Erling's comments. "[I am] an actually living representation of those statistics. I think that some of the challenges we talked about here at Mohonk Consultations' 1988 conference on the Future of Family Farming which I was part of, some of the threats to family farming, I think we've met some of those." But, he added, "this region is an increasingly expensive place to do business."

PETE TALIAFERRO of Taliaferro Farms in New Paltz NY noted "As far as supporting food security, hanging on to the land is a big part of it. Also the question of who is going to farm these lands [in the future]. . . . Young farmers are going to be the real glitch, in keeping food security in place in this Valley."

PAUL COLUCCI, of Full Moon Farm, in Gardiner NY raised a laugh by quoting Pete Taliaferro, "If you want to make a small fortune in



Map of the extensive markets within a five hour drive of the Hudson Valley. Courtesy of Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation.

agriculture, start out with a large one." He added, "But I was fortunate that I was born and raised here so I had a lot of contacts who have helped me... The biggest challenge I face is the dwindling availability of land. I can't afford to buy land here... [It's] a moving target for us. To put in all the infrastructure and then have the lease end after five years, for whatever reason, is a big challenge." Another issue, he said, "is the distance we have to ship our cattle to a processing site. . . . a 1.5 hour trip one way."



Mohonk Consultations' New Views of Hudson Valley

Hudson Valley Foodshed Conservation Plan



Photo by Patty Matteson.

STEVE ROSENBERG is Executive Director of the Scenic Hudson Land Trust and Sr. Vice President of Scenic Hudson, Inc. He leads their initiative to develop and execute a ground-breaking "NYC-Hudson Valley Foodshed Conservation Plan." (<http://www.scenichudson.org/foodshedplan>).

Steve emphasized their "critical mass approach" to "bring all the stakeholders together; to organize all the [area] land trusts around conservation of farm land as the highest priority." Soil type, farm size and clusters of farms in proximity are keys in determining which Hudson Valley land to conserve.

Further, he said, assuring "reliable funding in order to promote leverage from multiple stakeholders is critical, as well as developing metrics [for all stakeholders to define] success" of the Plan. So far 13,000 acres of farmland have been conserved by Scenic Hudson on 90 farms in 11 counties within 150 miles of New York City. However, those acres represent only 11 percent of the total farmland within those counties.

New Local Food & Farming Initiatives Panel

After lunching on local farm products, KATHLEEN FRITH, Director of Glynwood Center in Cold Spring NY and JERRY COSGROVE, Associate Director of the New World Foundation's Local Economies Project in Kingston NY spoke. Glynwood has begun a farm business incubator program



Grass-fed Devon cattle raised by Paul Colucci. Photo by Patty Matteson.



November 2014 Conference Farm & Agribusiness Leaders

at the former Brook Farm Project and Pine Farm sites in New Paltz, providing training for young farmers on composting, livestock production and related marketing and business strategies. Jerry described new Hudson Valley agricultural and economic initiatives, including the Hudson Valley Farm Hub on the former Gill Farm in Hurley. A hugely

collaborative project, the Hub gathers and shares best practices in crop selection, aggregation of products, cultivating markets for local food, as well as research and training. [Note: Some detail here is courtesy of Shawangunk Journal's reporter Chris Rowley.]

Farm Marketing Panel

JIM HYLAND, WinterSun Farms and Farm-to-Table Co-packers; JUSTINE LEGERE, co-owner and chef of Bridgeview Café and Catering; CHRIS GRACE, Co-coordinator of Farms to Institution NYS (FINYS) and the American Farmland Trust; and KEVIN TERR of Red Barn Produce - presented their current efforts to expand markets, and sell local farm products: the challenges in developing regional and institutional markets for their products, create new distribution avenues and products, and build their services. They detailed how they address economies of scale, their large corporate competitors, as well as efforts to balance seasonal supply and the rising demand for fresh local food.



Photo courtesy of Rondout Valley Growers Assoc & Woodcrest.

Suggested Next Steps

- Develop new markets and more collaboration between different sectors. Adopt a local currency. Support the creation of value-added products from farms.

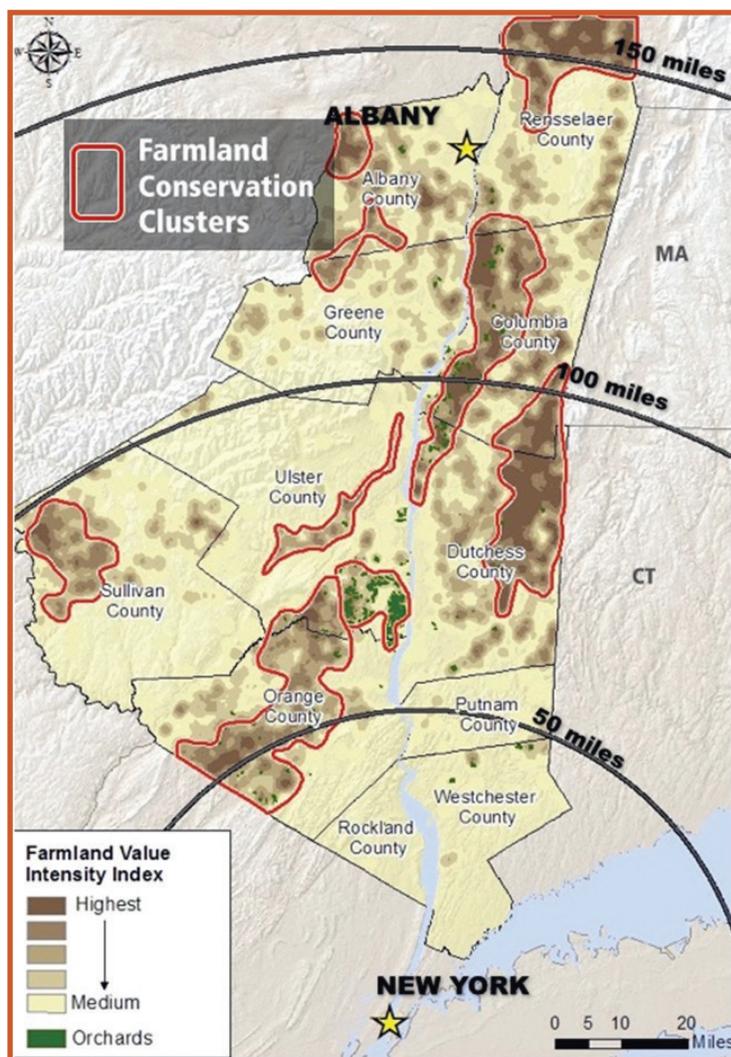
- Develop more farmer support systems and opportunities.
- Support seasonal labor on farms. The most important solution to this critical issue is immigration reform to provide stability and standards for seasonal laborers.



Photo courtesy of Rural & Migrant Ministry.

- Student work/service programs like AmeriCorps should be started because of climate change impacts. Fifty percent of the nation's food production could be lost in California's extended drought. Perhaps a summer service program in exchange for a first semester at college. Options might be farm work, weatherizing homes, learning about and helping to grow alternative energy, learning how to cook farm fresh food instead of processed food.

- More study of the affordability of conserved land in the future. How do you fund conserved land "in perpetuity"?
- Create an information clearing house for emergency situations i.e.. flooding, housing etc. Also form children's educational programs to cultivate, grow and care for the food produced.
- Change eating habits in schools to local fresh foods. Children's eating preferences can influence their parents' choices.
- Enhance coordination among our local distributors to get more local farms supplying large institutions, as opposed to large corporate distributors.



This map from SCENIC HUDSON identifies priorities of their NYC-Hudson Valley Foodshed Conservation Plan: 1) soil capacity per town; 2) farm size per town; 3) farmland density per town; 4) "farmland intensity index" per town; 5) average farmland intensity (plus orchards); 6) priority "farmland conservation clusters".

Reporting Back on Our 2014 Events

Monday, April 22 - We were joined in the Mohonk Mountain House Parlor by over 70 supporters at the presentation of our **2014 Distinguished Achievement Award** to Arm-of-the-Sea Theatre and its founders, Patrick Wadden and Marlena Marallo. The Award program included a performance of "Turtle Island Medicine Show."

For links to related information by participants in these events, please see our website.

Sunday April 27 - a working group of Mohonk Consultations Managers and community volunteers presented **Lyme Aid and Tick Talk: Seeking Solutions**, a community forum. Over 100 people were updated on legislative initiatives, problems faced by patients and their health care providers, solutions offered by biotech businesses and community activists. We are delighted that since the Forum, a bill prioritizing federal research on Lyme and related diseases and including all stakeholders at the table – sponsored by our keynote speaker Congressman Chris Gibson – passed in the US House of Representatives.

Monday November 10 - Mohonk Consultations hosted a full-day conference on **Local Food Security**. Please see pages 1, 4 & 5 for details.



A scene from Arm-of-the-Sea Theatre's "Turtle Island Medicine Show". Photo by Laura Jensen.

Our Especial Thanks

Barbara Valocore, Heriberto Dixon and Ann Guenther stepped off our Board of Managers in 2014. All three contributed years of service, insight and energy to Mohonk Consultations in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries of "talking it over at Mohonk." Applause and our gratitude to them for their generosity and unselfish work for us and our mutual communities.

Mohonk Consultations: Inspiring Positive Change for 35 Years!

Reflecting on the activities of Mohonk Consultations over the last 35 years may provide a renewed sense of optimism that people meeting and working together can surely make a difference in these extraordinarily challenging times. In order to sustain what we have that is essential, it's increasingly imperative for us to work cooperatively to enhance our resilience at the local, regional, and national levels. Consultations' long legacy of programming has brought folks together and resulted in numerous initiatives that go on producing practical solutions.

We can only do this with your help, and there is so much more that we could do. Please consider donating to support Mohonk Consultation's activities in 2015. For those who are inspired but unable to contribute financially, perhaps you have a skill or resource that can be of use – please feel free to inquire, even it is something simple.

We thank you so very much for your continued support of our mission.

Brad Berg, Chair
Mohonk Consultations Board of Managers



Our Deep Appreciation to the 2014 Contributors Who Keep Our Energies Strong! We Thank You Very Much.

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Local Businesses—in Honor of
Arm-of-the-Sea Theatre

Jenkins - Lueken Orchard, New Paltz NY

New Paltz Wine and Spirits

Stone Ridge Wine and Spirits

Photo courtesy of Brook Farm Project.

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Photo by Patty Matteson.