



Mohonk Consultations

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

NUMBER 28
AUTUMN 2017

Nature Across Boundaries: Keeping Lands and Waters Connected

"Scientists and conservation practitioners have learned that protecting biodiversity requires maintaining or restoring large, intact habitats that are connected to one another and to their associated ecological processes. Planning for such protection requires a landscape-wide perspective." (J. Wilkinson, S. Vickerman, and J. Lerner in "Nature in Fragments"¹)



"The Rensselaer Plateau east of Albany NY is estimated to be the fifth largest forested region in New York State. Its forests still exist in relatively large continuous blocks with few dividing roads..." Rensselaerplateau.org/wildlife -- Photo courtesy of Nate Simms.

The large landscapes of the Hudson Valley have historically been celebrated for their untouched beauty and sense of wildness. Painters and authors were inspired by the scenery and allure of the Catskill Mountains; vacationers sought retreat in the forests and lakes of the Shawangunk Ridge. Thanks to land preservation and management, these and other large, intact ecosystems remain in our region, such as the Hudson Highlands, the Albany Pine Bush, the Rensselaer Plateau, the Shawangunk grasslands, and the large freshwater wetlands of the Great Swamp (in Dutchess and Putnam counties).²

Nature cannot function in isolation, however, and decades of land use change have altered the landscape, leaving many protected areas disconnected from other natural areas. Highways and roads criss-cross large forests; culverts and dams sever streams and rivers; development

encircles ridgelines. These "fragmenting" patterns also impact smaller natural areas, such as vernal pools, meadows, woodlands, and shrublands, where poorly-planned developments often compromise habitat value for wildlife. *Continued on page 4*

Upcoming Programs: 2017 – 2018

Save these Dates!

Remember to check mohonk-consultations.org for updates. Also keep in mind that email reminders with registration links and details will be sent to you when available. Please make sure we have your email address.



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.



A view of unfragmented forest in the Catskill Mountains taken from Giant's Ledge. Photo by Laura Heady.

2017 Autumn Conference

Nature Across Boundaries: Keeping Lands and Waters Connected

Mon Nov 6, 2017, 9 am - 4:30 pm
Mohonk Mountain House Conference Center
(Please see cover and pp. 4-5 for article in this issue.)

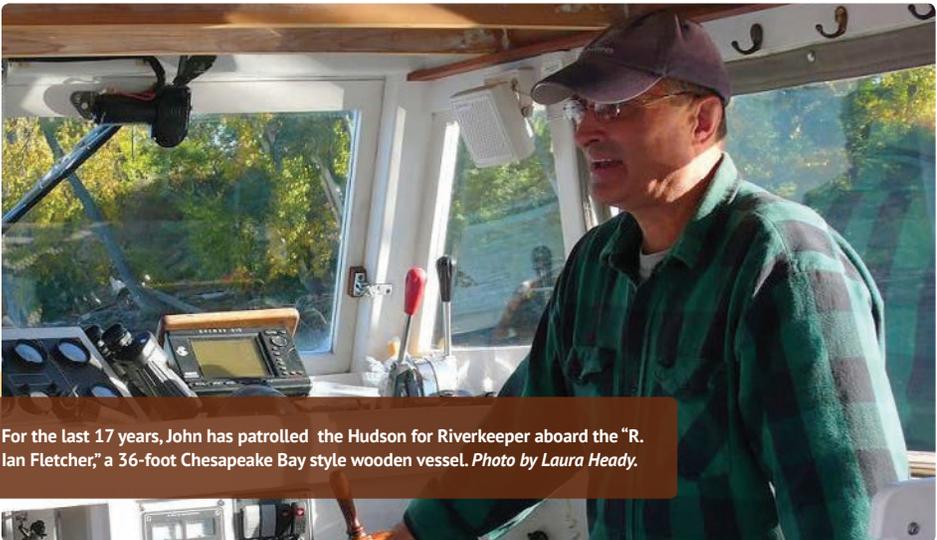
2018 Spring Forum

Follow-up on Nature Across Boundaries conference – topic TBD

Sun April 9, 2018, 3 - 6 pm

John Lipscomb of Riverkeeper to Receive 2018 Distinguished Achievement Award

Sun June 11, 2018, 5 - 8 pm



For the last 17 years, John has patrolled the Hudson for Riverkeeper aboard the "R. Ian Fletcher," a 36-foot Chesapeake Bay style wooden vessel. Photo by Laura Heady.

Mohonk Consultations takes great pleasure in recognizing and celebrating the region's unsung heroes and we're especially looking forward to giving the 2018 Distinguished Achievement Award to John Lipscomb, Patrol Boat Captain and Vice President for Advocacy at Riverkeeper.

From April into December each year, John travels approximately 4,000 to 5,000 nautical miles between New York Harbor and Troy, searching out and deterring polluters, monitoring tributaries and waterfront facilities, and conducting a sampling program to measure fecal contamination.

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NEWSLETTER

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Our annual newsletters are available as pdf files at mohonk-consultations.org.

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John supports researchers conducting scientific studies on the Hudson, and invites regional decision-makers and media to join him on patrols so that “the river has a chance to advocate for itself.” Riverkeeper is based in Ossining, NY. For their remarkable history see: riverkeeper.org/about-us/our-story/a-brief-history/.

John’s passion for the river is only surpassed by his tireless dedication. Day in and day out, he watches over the Hudson, speaks on behalf of the fish and wildlife that rely on the river and, with his contagious enthusiasm, ignites others to share in the stewardship responsibility of protecting our wonderful river.

Please join us to celebrate John Lipscomb. We will post more details as they become available on our website.

For more information about John and Riverkeeper you can view the MSNBC 2015 video, called The Batman of the Hudson River. msnbc.com/msnbc/watch/the-batman-of-the-hudson-river-509475395979

2018 Autumn Conference

Pastures of Plenty: Food, Justice and Labor in the Hudson Valley
Mon Nov 12, 2018 9 am – 4 pm. More details to come.



Captain John Lipscomb patrolling the Hudson River.
Photo courtesy of Riverkeeper.



Migrant laborers work in an apple orchard in Wayne County, NY.
Photo by Andrea Orejarena, courtesy of Rural Migrant Ministry, Poughkeepsie NY.

Autumn 2017 Letter To Our Friends

For more than 125 years, thousands of people from many walks of life have come to Mohonk Mountain House to “talk it over at Mohonk.”

A unique aspect of Mohonk Consultations is that people attend our conferences and forums, engage in networking and creative thinking, and then return to their communities, often leaving us unaware of the results and initiatives that have arisen following our events. Some follow ups are well known, such as the formation of the Hudson River Watershed Alliance, or UlsterCorps’ development of a network for food distribution to those experiencing food insecurity. So we are excited to announce a new video, created by local videographer Steve Jordan, highlighting Mohonk Consultations’ history, efforts and successes, which you can now see on our website and Facebook page. Please take a look.

As times are ever more challenging, please join us to experience the inspiration and cooperation that can lead to participation in solution-oriented actions. Feel free to share ideas about possible programming topics, and keep an eye out for more on peace building.

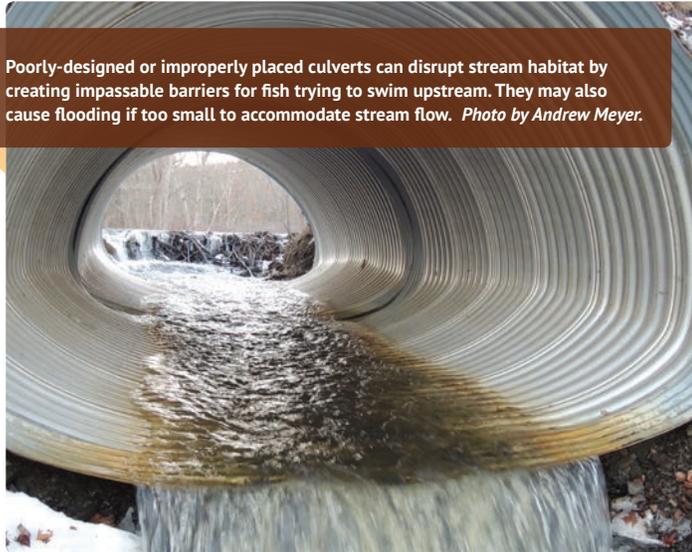
Heartfelt thanks to our Consultant and former US Congressman, the Honorable Maurice Hinchey. We are deeply grateful to Maurice, who has done so much good work in this region and in Washington DC.

We are very pleased to have Jesse Bruschini join us as our new part time Administrative Coordinator. She brings considerable skill and energy to our work. Jesse replaces Patty Matteson, who remains on our Board. We thank Patty very much for all that she has done so well.

Please take the opportunity to attend our programs, or in your own way, to share resources you may have that can assist us in manifesting our Mission. Your tax-deductible donations are deeply appreciated. Thanks so much.

– Brad Berg, Mohonk Consultations Board Chair

But wildlife is not alone in benefitting from large, natural landscapes. People also benefit. Intact ecosystems, such as networks of forests and wetlands, help to maintain our local clean water and air, and increase our communities' ability to adapt and be resilient to climate and environmental change. And, as our local history has shown, large expanses of nature provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and inspiration, and draw tourists from afar, strengthening our local economies.



Poorly-designed or improperly placed culverts can disrupt stream habitat by creating impassable barriers for fish trying to swim upstream. They may also cause flooding if too small to accommodate stream flow. Photo by Andrew Meyer.

Despite these benefits, natural areas continue to be fragmented into smaller and smaller pieces. Such careless division has its repercussions: it can make land uninhabitable for some animals, increase the vulnerability of wildlife moving across the landscape, and introduce invasive species in disturbed areas. This can lead to loss of biodiversity and a reduction in the overall function of the ecosystem.

In New York State, where land use authority is given to each village, city, and town, decisions about new development are often made at the parcel level, with little consideration about impacts to the larger ecosystem. For example, instead of considering how a wooded parcel relates to the surrounding large forest, or how a small wetland serves as the headwaters for a neighboring community's trout stream, emphasis is often site-by-site and/or decisions may be limited by economic factors.

“Ecosystems exist at the scale of thousands of acres, many at tens of thousands of acres, yet most of our decisions are made at a scale of 100 acres (40 hectares) or less, which is a small fraction of any given ecosystem. Decisions made at scales of hundreds of acres (or less) cannot be reassembled back into ecosystems...” according to Jayne Daly and Michael Klemens.²

Fortunately, there is a growing number of conservation and planning initiatives in New York State that strive to protect the long-term well-being of large landscapes for the benefit of nature and people. For example, the Adirondacks region is part of the Staying Connected Initiative, an international collaboration focused on the connectivity of forests that span New York, New England, and Canada. Staying Connected works at different scales and with numerous stakeholder groups to advance connectivity planning. Its comprehensive approach incorporates six key elements:

- Conservation science
- Land-use planning
- Local engagement
- Transportation
- Land protection
- Policy

Some Hudson Valley communities, land trusts, and conservation organizations also recognize the need to plan for connectivity, and have used innovative approaches and partnerships to make sure large, natural systems are conserved.

In the Hudson Highlands, conservation partners Black Rock Forest Consortium, Open Space Institute, the Orange County Land Trust, and the Hudson Highlands Land Trust are working together to protect stepping stone forests between Black Rock Forest and Schunemunk Mountain State Park in Orange County.

This conservation corridor of more than 117,000 acres preserves habitat and facilitates wildlife movement between these two protected areas. The corridor preservation plan is based on research on animal movements, habitat requirements, and ecological resilience priorities, and benefits from discussions with local communities and property owners as well as permanent protection of key parcels.



In the late winter and early spring throughout the Northeast, salamanders and frogs leave their forest habitats and migrate to vernal pools for breeding. They often encounter roads on these overland journeys, and mortality can be high, even in low-traffic areas. In some places, tunnels are installed to allow for safe passage and mitigate the fragmenting effects of roads on the amphibians' habitat. More often, volunteers become “crossing guards” and help to move amphibians like this spotted salamander to safety. Photo by Laura Heady.

Keeping Lands and Waters Connected

On a more local level, the Town of Red Hook continues to be an innovative leader in its commitment to conservation planning. Most recently, the community added habitat connectivity as a conservation target in its 2016 Community Preservation Plan Update. While the update continues to emphasize community priorities such as farmland, water resources, and scenic features targeted in the original 2011 plan, it now incorporates the results of a Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell project that modeled habitat linkages in the town and neighboring villages. “These linkages can serve to connect high-quality forests, streams, and wetlands, and contribute to wildlife habitat as well as community resilience,” said Town of Red Hook Supervisor Robert McKeon. “They will now be considered along with other criteria as the community applies its Community Preservation Fund to protect important lands and waters.”

“... [A] new paradigm is needed – one that advances the proposition that instead of developing land with the naïve expectation that ecosystems will magically rearrange themselves around a new development (i.e. the old thinking) a community should first understand its ecosystems and then place development where it will minimize ecological impact. By doing so, we will bring biodiversity conservation fully into the smart-growth equation, creating quality communities that sustain both humans and the ecosystems on which all life ultimately depends.” (Daly and Klemens, “*Nature in Fragments*”¹)



Connectivity planning can occur at many scales, including at the parcel level. New development that clusters homes and preserves the natural conditions of a site can help maintain large blocks of habitat. (Copyright images from *Make Room for Wildlife: A Resource for Planners & Communities in the Adirondacks*, courtesy of the Wildlife Conservation Society, 2009.)

How else can we increase and support connectivity of lands and waters in the Hudson Valley? Mohonk Consultations will present a full-day conference to discuss this topic, highlighting additional case studies from the region and new connectivity planning tools. **Please join us!**

Nature Across Boundaries: Keeping Lands and Waters Connected

Monday, November 6, 2017, 9 am - 4:30 pm
Mohonk Mountain House Conference Center

Conference presentations and discussions will provide insights on how we can each contribute to habitat connectivity at various scales, from multi-parcel to multi-state, and across our individual roles, from landowner to land manager to land-use planner.

Speakers include:

Karen Firehock
Executive Director, The Green Infrastructure Center

Dr. Heidi Kretser
Deputy Director, Conservation and Communities, Wildlife Conservation Society

Dr. Matt Schlesinger
Chief Zoologist, New York Natural Heritage Program

Robert Wills
Senior GIS Project Coordinator, Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development

Kara Hartigan Whelan
Vice President, Westchester Land Trust

Amanda LaValle
Coordinator, Ulster County Department of the Environment

Seth McKee
Land Conservation Director, Scenic Hudson

We look forward to connecting with you in November to discuss this important topic and learn how collaboration and innovation can lead to conservation success in our spectacular Hudson Valley. Please ensure we have your email address for invitation and registration details, and please check our conference web page for more information:

mohonk-consultations.org/2017-conference

¹ E.A. Johnson and M.W. Klemens (eds.). 2005. *Nature in Fragments: The Legacy of Sprawl*. Columbia University Press, New York.

² Penhollow, M. E., P. G. Jensen, and L.A. Zucker. 2006. *Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Framework: An Approach for Conserving Biodiversity in the Hudson River Estuary Corridor*. New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Cornell University and NYSDEC, Hudson River Estuary Program, Ithaca, NY.

2017 Events Thus Far

Spring Forum

Sunday April 9, 2017, Mohonk Mountain House Parlor

We hosted over 75 people at our forum, "Working Across Difference: Meeting Refugees in Crisis," with co-sponsors Mid-Hudson Valley United Nations Association-USA, Lifebridge Foundation, and RiverTides.

Speakers included:

Ilgü Özler, Director of SUNY's Global Engagement Program in NYC and President of the UN Association Mid-Hudson Valley.

Giovanni Ciarlo, Academic Director & E-learning Coordinator of Gaia Education.

Tara Stuart, world traveler, educator, storyteller, and on the Board of Directors of Kosmos Associates.

Distinguished Achievement Award

Sunday June 11, 2017, Mohonk Mountain House Parlor



Chef John Novi (above, photo courtesy of Lauren Thomas), "father of New American cuisine" was celebrated in the Mohonk Mountain House Parlor by 156 friends. The ceremony included testimonies by:

Janet Crawshaw and Jerry Novesky, co-founders of The Valley Table: The Magazine of Hudson Valley Farms, Food and Cuisine.

A silent auction and East Porch reception followed.

Steven C. Kolpan, Professor and Chair of Wine Studies at The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde Park.

Christopher Marx, Associate Vice President for Workforce and Economic Development and Community Partnerships at SUNY Ulster.

Michael Ryan, Mohonk Mountain House Spa Therapist Supervisor.

Kevin Zraly, former Wine Director of Windows on the World Restaurant atop One World Trade Center (1976 – 2001) and founder and teacher, Windows on the World Wine School.

Transforming Our World: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Sunday September 17, 2017, Lifebridge Sanctuary in Rosendale NY

A highly interactive and participatory training workshop was conducted by sustainability educator and designer, May East, and was co-sponsored by Lifebridge, RiverTides, Mohonk Consultations, and Mid-Hudson UNA-USA. Since 1992, May has been based at the Findhorn Ecovillage, a recipient of the UN Best Practices Award.

A New Mohonk Legacy Room

The current Mohonk Preserve room in the Mohonk Mountain House will be renovated next year to create a new Mohonk Legacy Room. This project will highlight the Quaker roots of the Smiley family, the ensuing, core work of Keith and Dan Smiley, and that of Mohonk Consultations and the Mohonk Preserve, as they evolve now. We invite you to participate in this creative process by sharing ideas and/or financial contributions.



– Sandra Smiley, Board of Managers

New Teammates Build Us Up

Jesse Chapman-Bruschini

began working with Mohonk Consultations beginning September 5 as Administrative Coordinator. She owns Small World Projects, a communications consulting firm, whose main clients are conservation non-profits. Her experience includes working with wildlife conservation organizations based in the NYC area: The Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Trust, The Institute for Ocean Conservation Science and The Blue Ocean Institute.



Jesse's experience also includes bilingual (Spanish/English) advertising and media relations campaigns for a range of corporate clients – from Greyhound to Gatorade. She has a Masters in Spanish Linguistics from the University of Illinois.

She has a close affinity with Consultations' mission. She sees it as a way to support local and regional sustainability efforts while also promoting an emerging culture of peace more broadly. Jesse said, "Working with Mohonk Consultations seems like a natural fit and a way to express my love for the Hudson Valley and my ongoing dedication to the environment, sustainable development and social justice."

Michelle Acosta

is Consulting Controller at Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. She gave her considerable talents to our Finance Work Group for the summer and we thank her. She says, "I love everything that Consultations stands for. In this day and age... we need more than ever an organization like it. Consultations brings people together in an ultimate quest to learn from each other and to find a mutual ground for peace and equality."



THANK YOU to Our Bighearted 2016 -2017 Donors!

Since September 10, 2016

Together we improve the lives of the people, land and ecosystems around us. We are deeply appreciative for your support.

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Mohonk Legacy Room
Wendy Smiley
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Estate of Helen Vukasin
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Diana Zuckerman

Organizations

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NYS Rotary District 7210 - Louis Turpin
Sushi Makio
Whitecliff Winery

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Please send me the newsletter electronically via email to save printing, paper and postage.



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SAVE THESE DATES

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UN Decade on Biodiversity 2011 - 2020

As long ago as 1988, the United Nations established working groups aimed at addressing the loss of biodiversity on earth. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, first articulated in 2010, set up their Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020 and states the current rationale: "... Biological diversity underpins ecosystem functioning and the provision of ecosystem services essential for human well-being. It provides for food security, human health, the provision of clean air and water; it contributes to local livelihoods, and economic development, and is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty reduction..."

For more information see the Convention on Biological Diversity's website at:
www.cbd.int/2011-2020/

