



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Parks, Recreation
and Historic
Preservation

Department
of State

Agriculture
and Markets

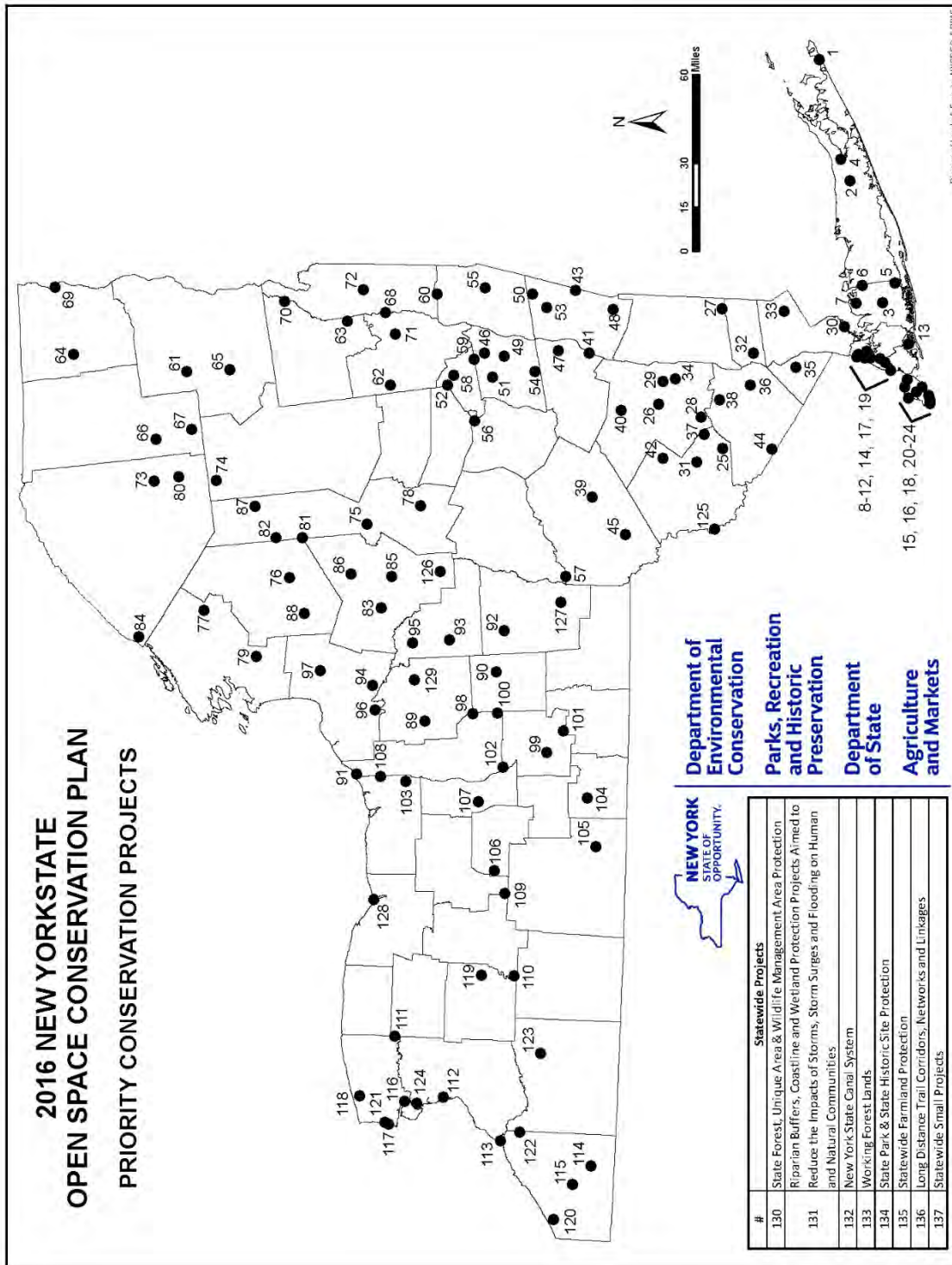
Department of
Transportation

2016

NEW YORK STATE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN

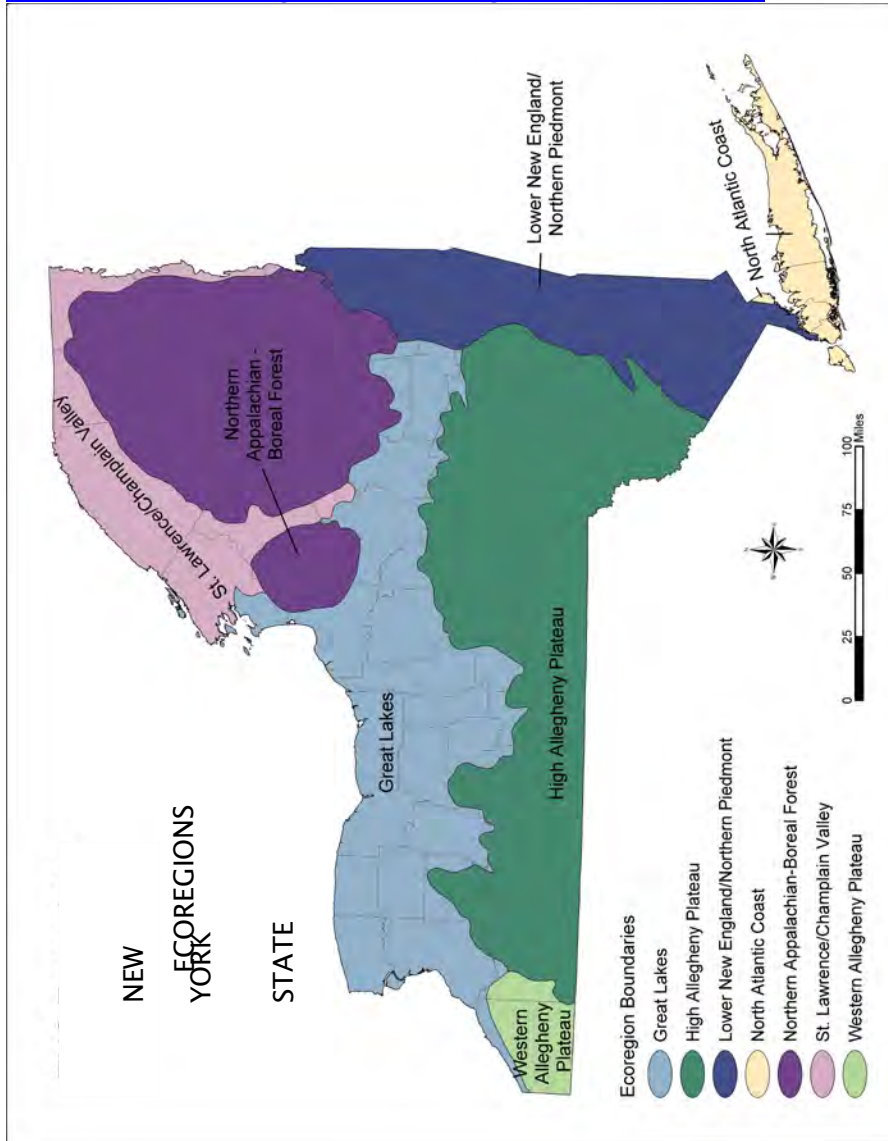


Priority Projects Map



Ecoregions Map

The identification of seven (7) distinct ecological systems or “ecoregions” within New York State will assist DEC in achieving a more unified ecosystem-based approach to managing our state's natural resources. For more information on ecoregions, see the www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/item1847.html.



New York State Ecoregions
Identified by The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

NEW YORK STATE'S REGIONAL OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The following conservation projects have been identified through the nine Regional Advisory Committees (Committees) and public comments received through the Open Space Conservation Plan's (Plan) review process. It represents the unique and irreplaceable open space resources of New York that encompass exceptional ecological, wildlife, recreational, scenic, and historical values. The identification of these projects is a result of extensive analysis of our state's open space conservation needs by the Committees, in consultation with DEC and OPRHP staff. These projects are filtered through a wide spectrum of professional expertise found on each of the Committees through a consensus-based process.

Each of DEC's nine administrative regions is represented by a Committee consisting of members appointed by the DEC and OPRHP commissioners, and by each of the counties within each region. Members are knowledgeable about open space conservation, and represent municipal government, conservation not-for-profits, forestry and agricultural interests and recreational user groups such as sportsmen and women. Each committee submits a report containing recommended priority conservation projects for their region, and advice and recommendations on policies and priorities, studies and assessments, the consideration of economic impacts, the ecological value of projects, and other relevant matters.

Committee reports can be found in the Plan's electronic Appendix A. Information on the identification process of priority projects can be found in the Plan's electronic Appendix B and C. Appendices are located on DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/98720.html.

NEW YORK STATE'S PRIORITY OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Since the development of the state's first Open Space Plan in 1992, the list of conservation projects has grown from 75 to 140. Many of these projects involve conservation work that has gone on for decades and which will require work far into the future. Though much work is ahead, the increase in number of projects is indicative of the broad public support that exists throughout New York for an open space conservation program, and for the many environmental and economic benefits such a program delivers to its communities.

Priority projects included on this list are eligible for funding from the state's Environmental Protection Fund, and other state, federal and local funding sources. For most of the project areas identified, a combination of state and local acquisition, land use regulation, smart development decisions, land

REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

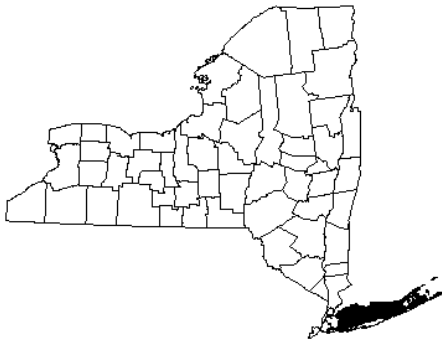
owner incentives and other conservation tools used in various combinations, will be needed to succeed in conserving these open space resources for the long term. Many of the priority project areas are large and will require a balance between conservation and compatible, natural resource-sensitive economic development.

Species of Greatest Conservation Need

As New York's varied geology creates habitats that support a rich diversity of species, many of these habitats are being fragmented and lost to development, causing a decline of many of the state's native plants and animals. Protection of habitat through the open space planning process is a key strategy in securing the future of the state's biological diversity. The Plan identifies projects that will help sustain habitats for species of greatest conservation need, which have been identified through the state's conservation planning process.

- {#} Refers to the location identified on **Regional Priority Conservation Projects** map.
- ◆ Refers to priority projects which support **Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)** as identified in New York's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Plan.
- ^ Refers to critical **Important Bird Areas (IBA)** identified by Audubon NY (National Audubon Society) through a global partnership led by BirdLife International: Fort Edward/Washington County Grasslands IBA (Region 5); Calverton Grasslands in the Long Island Pine Barrens IBA (Region 1); St. Lawrence Valley IBAs (Region 6), Point Peninsula, Perch River Complex, Lisbon Grasslands, Indian River/Black Lakes IBAs; Tug Hill IBAs (Region 6); and Niagara River Corridor IBA (Region 9).

REGION 1 /LONG ISLAND



Long Island is only about 21,000 years old, a 118-mile long wrack line of glacial till left behind at the end of the last ice age. The terrain reads like an earth science text book. Rocky beaches hugging the coastal moraine on the north shore, followed by a swale of fertile inland rising to a second moraine down the center of the Island, descending to a sprawling glacial plain and white sand beaches on the Atlantic Ocean coast. Because it is situated at the biogeographical range limit for many northern and southern species of flora and fauna, Long

Island is the most species diverse region in the State. Some preserves have the highest ratio of rare species to land area in the State. This beautiful Island supports farming, a vibrant fishing industry, world class outdoor recreation and tourism that contribute to both the Long Island and New York State economy. It also sits atop its sole source aquifer which provide drinking water to it nearly 3 million residents. It's a lot of special packed into a little place.

REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

To read the Region 1 Advisory Committee's full report, see: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html.

ATLANTIC COAST {1.} ♦^ – Acquisition of coastal parcels for active and passive recreation, habitat and endangered species protection, coastal resiliency and mitigation of the effects of sea-level rise due to climate change. Representative projects include:

- **Barrier Islands:** Parcels on the barrier islands protecting Long Island's south shore from the Atlantic Ocean, including Long Beach Island and Fire Island. Of special concern are lots fronting the Atlantic Ocean that are susceptible to erosion and flooding from wave action and storm surge.
- **Montauk Moorlands:** East Hampton: Suffolk. Consolidation of public ownership, two parcels totaling 52 acres and fronting the Atlantic Ocean for shoreline and habitat protection and public access.

CENTRAL PINE BARRENS {2.} ♦^ – Acquisition of vacant land within the legislatively designated boundary of the Central Pine Barrens (ECL 57-0101(11)). Available, privately owned parcels within the Core and Critical Resources Areas (CRA) should be acquired, as well as select projects in the Compatible Growth Areas (CGA). Representative projects include:

- **Carmans River Watershed:** Brookhaven: Suffolk. Parcels within the newly expanded Central Pine Barrens legislative boundary that now encompasses the Carmans River watershed, consistent with the Town's "Carmans River Conservation and Management Plan."
- **South River Road Additions:** Brookhaven: Suffolk. Parcels in single ownership bounded by the Peconic River on the north, Nugent Drive on the south and DEC's South River Road parcels on the east and west, for consolidation, preservation and greatly expanded recreational opportunities.
- **Pine Ridge Preserve:** Brookhaven: An 800-acre parcel of highly intact pine barrens forest containing significant habitat for rare Lepidoptera (coastal buckmoth) and several NYS natural heritage ranked species. Remarkably free of invasive plant species.
 - **Calverton Grasslands:** Riverhead: Suffolk County. Parcels totaling 800 acres, including 565 acres at Enterprise Park at Calverton (EPCAL), comprising the largest contiguous grassland habitat on Long Island and one of the most significant in the state.
 - **Southampton Pine Barrens:** Southampton: Suffolk County. Core, CRA and CGA parcels to maintain the hydrological and ecological integrity of the area.

LONG ISLAND SOUND {3.} ♦^ – Acquisition of open space within the boundaries of the federally designated Long Island Sound Estuary, including Sound-front and watershed parcels. **Acquisitions protect ground and surface water quality, improve coastal resiliency, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and support water-based industry and tourism.** Representative projects include:

- **Mitchell Creek Wetlands:** North Hempstead: Nassau County. Tidal and freshwater wetlands draining to Manhasset Bay for erosion control, habitat protection and linkage to the Shoreline-to-Shoreline Trail running from Manhasset Bay to Hempstead Harbor.
- **Sagamore Hill Additions:** Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Parcels flanking Sagamore Hill National Park on the Cove Neck peninsula, most fronting Oyster Bay or Cold Spring Harbor.

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- Shu Swamp Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Land adjacent to Shu Swamp, a Class I freshwater wetland within the Oyster Bay Special Groundwater Protection Area (SGPA) and habitat for several threatened and rare species.
- Kate Trubee Davison Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Open space connecting the Trubee Preserve, City of Glen Cove parkland and Village of Lattingtown wetlands.
- Manhasset Bay Access: North Hempstead: Nassau County. Parcels fronting Manhasset Bay in Port Washington, providing new opportunities for public access to the water.
- Oyster Bay Harbor: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Land surrounding Oyster Bay Harbor to support the state's largest oyster fishery, provide recreational opportunities, and increase coastal resiliency.
- Glenwood Landing: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Eight-acre waterfront property on Hempstead Harbor, including woods, sandy open space, and almost four acres of underwater land adjacent to Tappan Beach Town Park.
- Eaton's Neck: Huntington: Suffolk County. A single 452.5-acre parcel on the Eaton's Neck peninsula, with over a mile of shoreline and excellent coastal habitats.
- Seminary Property: Huntington: Suffolk County. A single 225-acre parcel adjoining Caumsett State Park, with extensive frontage on Lloyd Harbor, including high-quality tidal wetlands, coastal forest and grassland habitat.
- Nissequogue River Corridor: Smithtown: Suffolk County. Parcels adjoining state land in this scenic and recreational river corridor, including the 116-acre St. Johnland property, to consolidate public holdings, protect river and Long Island Sound water quality and increase recreational water access.
- Flax Pond: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. A heavily wooded 6-acre parcel with 300 feet of frontage on Flax Pond, adjoining Flax Pond State Tidal Wetlands.
- Conscience Bay Watershed: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. A 3-acre Class I wetland and stream and a 17-acre wooded property adjacent to Patriot's Hollow State Forest in the zone of capture for nearby public water supply wells.
- Wading River Assemblage: Riverhead: Suffolk County. Sound- and river-front parcels and wetlands within the watershed totaling 500 acres in Wading River, including land owned by Little Flower Children Services and the Boy Scouts of America.
- Key Span: Brookhaven and Riverhead: Suffolk County. An 893-acre property in Shoreham and Wading River with 1 mile of Sound frontage and 2,000 feet along Wading River Marsh.
- Nassau County 4H: Riverhead: Suffolk. A 138-acre property in Roanoke, providing opportunities for access to Long Island Sound, camping, environmental education and passive recreation.
- North Bergen Avenue Sound-front: Southold: Suffolk. Ninety-five acres of woods and meadow in Mattituck, with over 2,100 feet of bluff frontage on the Sound.
- Goldsmith's Inlet/Peconic Dunes Additions: Southold: Suffolk. Assemblage totaling 165 acres east of Henry's Lane in Peconic, between CR48 and the Long Island Sound, including freshwater wetlands and trail linkages within the Southold SGPA.
- Plum Island: Southold: Suffolk. Failing transfer to USFWS for a federal preserve, the undeveloped portion of Plum Island, 600-700 acres, for wildlife habitat, shoreline preservation and protection of significant cultural resources.

REGIONAL PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS

PECONIC PINELANDS MARITIME RESERVE {4.} ♦^ – Acquisition of open space within the legislatively designated boundary of the Peconic Pinelands Maritime Reserve (Article 57 ECL), an interconnected area encompassing both the central Long Island Pine Barrens and the Peconic Estuary, a federally designated estuary of national significance. Acquisitions will protect the surface waters of the Peconic Bay and the groundwater of several SGPAs, improve coastal resiliency, mitigate the effects of sea-level rise due to climate change, provide opportunities for land- and water-based outdoor recreation, and preserve high-quality wildlife habitat. Representative projects include:

- **Broadcove: Riverhead: Suffolk County.** A 94.6-acre former duck farm in Aquebogue containing extensive tidal wetlands and shoreline habitat along Terry's Creek and Broad Cove, as well as upland woods and open fields.
- **Riverhead Creeks: Riverhead: Suffolk County.** Parcels fronting or draining to Sawmill Creek, Terry's Creek, Meetinghouse Creek, Reeves Creek and Cases Creek to protect surface water quality.
- **South Fork Wildlands and Groundwater Protection Area: Southampton: Suffolk.** Assemblage of 1,000 acres of nearly contiguous forest in the Tuckahoe Woods, Great Hill, Noyack Hills, and Long Pond Greenbelt regions of the South Fork, including pristine deep flow recharge areas in the SGPA.
- **Corey Creek Expansion: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels fronting and adjacent to Corey Creek and protected Town and County land to consolidate public ownership for better protection of the tidal wetland resources.
- **Pipe's Cove Complex: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels totaling 200 acres to consolidate public ownership in the wetlands complex that includes Arshamomaque Preserve, Moore's Woods, Inlet Pond County Park, Pipes Creek, Pipes Neck Creek and Pipes Cove Bay to protect the largest relatively undisturbed salt-marsh habitat remaining on the North Fork.
- **Hashamomuck Pond: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels totaling 80 acres fronting and within the watershed of the pond and Town preserve, for public waterway access, protection of tidal wetlands and wildlife habitat, floodplain protection and flood hazard mitigation.
- **Orient State Park Viewshed: Southold: Suffolk.** Parcels on the south side of Main Road adjacent to Long Beach Bay State Tidal Wetlands and in the viewshed of Orient Beach State Park, to improve coastal resiliency and enhance existing public holdings.
- **East Marion Waterfront: One 19-acre parcel on Shipyard Lane fronting Orient Harbor, including tidal wetlands and a vacant oyster factory, for coastal resiliency, habitat restoration as mitigation for sea-level rise, and new public waterway access.**
- **East Hampton Pine Barrens: East Hampton: Suffolk.** Parcels in the South Fork SGPA near Wainscott and Sag Harbor, atop the most voluminous portion of East Hampton's potable groundwater supply.
- **Camp Blue Bay: East Hampton: Suffolk.** A 171-acre camp fronting Gardiner's Bay in Springs, comprising primarily old fields with stands of red cedar coastal forest. The property's sandy beaches are backed by coastal bluffs rising to 65 feet.
- **Stony Hill Woods: East Hampton: Suffolk.** Nearly 550 acres in northern Amagansett on the glacial moraine, containing old-growth forest and kettle hole ponds, for preservation of wildlife habitat, deep groundwater recharge areas and continuity of the Paumanok Path.
- **Lazy Point Assemblage: East Hampton: Suffolk.** Small parcels totaling 25 acres adjoining Napeague State Park, for public access, trail linkage, and dune protection within the 100-year floodplain.

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SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE {5.} ♦^ – Acquisition of open space within the boundaries of the state– designated South Shore Estuary Reserve, a 326–square–mile area encompassing south shore bays and their watersheds, for coastal resiliency, mitigation of sea–level rise, water quality and habitat protection, public waterway access and preservation of historic, cultural and maritime resources. Several projects are in the 100–year flood plain and/or Potential Environmental Justice Area (PEJA) communities. Representative projects include:

- Nassau Tributary/Bay Buffer Sites: Hempstead: Nassau County. Waterfront parcels such as the Harbor Isle site (Camp DeBraun was lost to Stop and Shop during the drafting of this report), to buffer creeks and bays from developed areas and increase public access to the water in highly populated and PEJA communities.
- Middle Bay Country Club: Hempstead: Nassau. One hundred forty six acres of private recreational open space in heavily populated Oceanside, with extensive shoreline on Middle Bay entirely within the FEMA 100–year floodplain, great potential for tidal marsh migration. Mud Creek Tributary Wetlands: West Babylon: Suffolk. 11.7 acres woods and freshwater wetland on a tidal creek tributary for coastal resiliency and nature preserve, adjacent to County parkland. Very high water table and FEMA 100 year flood plain.
- Patchogue River Maritime Park: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Small but critical 2.5–acre parcel for much needed public water access in a PEJA community. The site is improved and will require demolition and restoration or redevelopment.
- Forge River at Old Mastic: Land and easements along the Forge River, Poospatuck Creek and Lons Creek, for waterway access, coastal resiliency and water quality protection, including a 4.5–acre parcel on the Forge River owned by Stony Brook University Foundation; adjacent to a PEJA community.
- Mastic–Shirley Conservation Area: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Assemblage of small lots in a 500–acre wetland complex on the Great South Bay. Exceptional habitat as well as critical flood protection to the low–lying communities of Mastic, Mastic Beach and Shirley in the 100–year floodplain.
- Carll’s River Watershed Addition: Babylon and Huntington: Suffolk. Small parcels at the headwaters of the Carll’s River, north of Belmont Lake State Park in the PEJA communities of North Babylon and Wyandanch.
- Haven’s Point Additions: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. An eight–acre parcel adjacent to DEC’s tidal wetlands in East Moriches, to enhance public access and buffer the wetlands and Seatuck Cove from residential runoff.
- Shinnecock Bay: Southampton: Suffolk County. Parcels in the back–barrier salt marsh between the Villages of Quogue and Southampton, including open water, dredge islands and intertidal flats critical for fish and shellfish, waterfowl, migratory shorebirds, rare plants and federally listed sea turtles.

SPECIAL GROUND WATER PROTECTION AREAS {6.} – Acquisition of vacant land and conservation easements within the nine Special Groundwater Protection Areas identified in the 1992 Long Island Comprehensive Special Groundwater Protection Area Plan. The protection of land within SGPA

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boundaries is directly linked to the long-term health of Long Island's drinking water supply.

Representative projects include:

- Whitney Estate: North Hempstead: Nassau. One 325-acre parcel and several small parcels comprising the last large tract of undeveloped land in the Town, located in the North Hills SGPA and containing four water supply wells.
- Old Westbury Gardens Enhancement Area: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Several parcels totaling more than 300 acres in the Oyster Bay SGPA anchored by Old Westbury Gardens, a 160-acre privately operated historic site and nature preserve.
- Route 25A Heritage Area: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Assemblage of parcels along Route 25A in the state-designated Long Island North Shore Heritage Area and the Oyster Bay SGPA, to preserve historic resources in addition to the drinking water supply.
- Planting Fields Arboretum Additions: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Parcels totaling over 600 acres near or adjoining Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park in the Oyster Bay SGPA.
- Tiffany Creek Preserve: Oyster Bay: Nassau. Parcels adjacent to the Preserve in the Oyster Bay SGPA, encompassing two water district wells, spring-fed ponds, old-growth woods, and habitat for migratory songbirds, several turtle species and tiger salamanders.
- Wade: Babylon: Suffolk. Agricultural easement on a 20-acre property currently farmed but already subdivided for development, in a deep recharge area of the West Hills/Melville SGPA and within the South Shore Estuary Reserve.
- Camp Kaufman/USDAN: Babylon and Huntington: Suffolk. A 500-acre parcel in Wheatley Heights (PEJA) and Half Hollow, to protect a major drinking water well less than 100 feet down the gradient in the West Hills/Melville SGPA. The Camp lies within the boundaries of the South Shore Estuary Reserve and adjacent to the Motor Parkway r-o-w.
- Pineridge Park and Additions: Huntington: Suffolk. One-hundred-sixty-two acres in the West Hills/Melville SGPA, adjacent to Old Bethpage Village Restoration and Bethpage State Park, characterized by oak-mixed heath forest, low bush blueberry and sandy soils.
- Oak Brush Plains State Preserve: Huntington: Babylon, Islip, Suffolk. In accordance with Chapter 635 of the Laws of 1987, any land deemed surplus at Pilgrim State Hospital on which natural vegetation may be reasonably restored; located in the Oak Brush Plains SGPA.
- Laurel Lake Additions: Southold: Suffolk. Key parcels in the Southold SGPA totaling nearly 120 acres, for consolidation of public lands resulting in better protection of the drinking water supply.

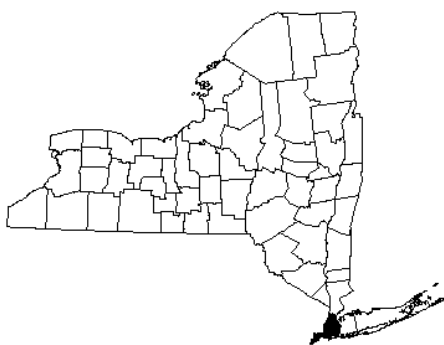
TRAILS and GREENWAYS {7.} – Acquisition of land along foot, bike and equestrian trails and greenways, to provide non-motorized travel corridors for people and wildlife and to link recreational, natural and cultural attractions. Representative projects include:

- Shoreline-to-Shoreline Trail: Hempstead, North Hempstead: Nassau County. Land and trail easements along a 12-mile trail corridor crossing the Port Washington peninsula, from the western shore of Manhasset Bay to the eastern shore of Hempstead Harbor.
- Hempstead Harbor Shoreline Trail System: North Hempstead: Nassau County. Land and trail easements, to create an interconnected system of trails around Hempstead Harbor linking 21 communities.

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- Muttontown Preserve Trails: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Parcels adjoining the Preserve, to prevent fragmentation of a heavily used horse and foot trail system in the Oyster Bay SGPA and containing rare plants, tiger salamanders, and glacial kettle-hole ponds.
- SUNY Old Westbury Trails: Oyster Bay: Nassau County. Parcels adjoining the SUNY/Old Westbury Campus, to maintain connectivity of popular horse and foot trails and protect groundwater recharge areas in the Oyster Bay SGPA.
- Trail View State Park Additions: Oyster Bay and Huntington: Nassau and Suffolk. Parcels to buffer and enhance this linear state park that runs from Bethpage State Park to Cold Spring Harbor State Park.
- Long Island Motor Parkway Trail: Multiple Towns: Nassau and Suffolk: Dedication of the old Motor Parkway right-of-way as parkland plus acquisition of additional parcels, to create a historic and recreational trail from Queens to Lake Ronkonkoma.
- Glacial Ridge Trail: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Linkage and buffer parcels along this five-mile trail, which runs east-west along the Ronkonkoma terminal moraine between Brookhaven Town Hall and public land on the Carmans River.
- Shore-to-Core-to-Shore Trail: Brookhaven: Suffolk County. Land and easements to complete this north-south trail from the Long Island Sound to the Great South Bay Terrells River County Preserve, linking several state and county preserves along the way.
- Peconic River Greenway: Riverhead: Suffolk County. Land and trail easements along the Peconic River Trail, providing public access to the State Scenic and Recreational River and trail linkage to heavily used Stotsky Park in a PEJA community.

REGION 2/NEW YORK CITY/5 BOROUGHES



Although it may look solidly urban on a map, New York City has a surprising amount of green space in its many parks and coastal wetlands. The serpentine rock that makes up part of Staten Island is a geologic historical marker from the days when North America and Europe collided hundreds of millions of years ago. More recent natural history in this area is represented by an ecological transition zone which represents the northern limit of many southern tree species, such as willow oaks. And it is here where the Hudson River finally meets the sea. Evidence of

humans dominates the landscape, yet where human endeavors have been abandoned, vegetation has gently reclaimed the area. A surprising number of heron rookeries exist in wetlands and on uninhabited islands, and there is much more wildlife than many people realize. Open green space is precious in a major urban area where land prices are often calculated in terms of square feet and remains vital to the wellbeing of the millions of people who use and often treasure this space.

To read the Region 2 Advisory Committee's full report, see: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html.

WATERFRONT ACCESS

BRONX

MOTT HAVEN–PORT MORRIS WATERFRONT {8.} – The Mott Haven–Port Morris Waterfront Plan is consistent with three re–zonings on adjacent land, as well as the Vision 2020 NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. It provides a logical solution to climate change effects on the Significant Maritime and Industrial Area (SMIA) located within flood zones, and it gives the underserved community access to designated open space to counteract health consequences caused by an oversaturation of highways and truck–intensive businesses. The plan consists of the following interconnected projects: Bronx Kill Waterfront Park, Park Avenue Boat Launch/Waterfront Park, Lincoln Avenue Waterfront Park (with Alexander Avenue Extension), East 132nd Street Pier, Historic Port Morris Gantries and a waterfront connecting path.

BRONX RIVER GREENWAY {9.} – Creation of a greenway/trailway along the Bronx River from 172d Street to Hunts Point Riverside Park and Soundview Park. This corridor, using on–street greenway connections in the interim while opportunities for direct waterfront parcel acquisitions are achieved, will connect with the existing 17–mile greenway/trailway to the Kensico Reservoir in Westchester County.

- **City Island Wetlands** – A vacant Bronx shorefront area in its natural state with significant wetlands will also provide public access to the waterfront.
 - **City Island Gateway** – Located just east of the City Island Bridge, this private parcel is waterfront property that faces Pelham Bay Park and Orchard Beach to the north, and would make an outstanding site for a community boat launch.
- **Putnam Railroad** – A greenway through the northern Bronx using an abandoned railroad Right of Way (R.O.W.)
 - **Daylight Tibbets Brook** – New Addition. Extending from Van Cortlandt Park along the Putnam Line to the Harlem River, this will create a greenway/bluebelt pathway connecting and interconnecting existing state trailways to other greenways.
- **Hudson River Greenway** – Acquisition of College Point, a parcel on the Hudson River in the northern Bronx. The preferred route for the Hudson River Greenway will include 3.8 miles of Hudson River waterfront. Acquisition of this land will provide the only public park stop along the Greenway in the Bronx.

BRONX/NEW YORK

HARLEM RIVER WATERFRONT {10.} – The public access objective for the Harlem River area is to provide pedestrians and cyclists with opportunities to enjoy both banks of the river through expansion of waterfront parks and creation of a continuous pathway within the city–wide greenway system. Bronx and Manhattan parks and greenways will be connected by existing bridges, including the non–vehicular historic High Bridge.

BRONX HARLEM GREENWAY {11.} – The five–acre Spuyten Duyvil/Penn Central Triangle properties could provide waterfront access at the junction of the Hudson and Harlem rivers as well as wetlands

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preservation opportunities; the CSX-owned and city-owned parcels north of Fordham Road offer connection to the future Putnam Greenway; the 3.7-acre Fordham Landing property at the end of Fordham Road is a vacant, privately owned parcel that could provide additional waterfront parkland in an under-served community, with a waterfront greenway connection south to Roberto Clemente State Park; redevelopment of the waterfront areas at the south end of Roberto Clemente State Park would further extend waterfront parklands and greenway along a particularly scenic portion of the Harlem River Valley (facing Manhattan's Highbridge Park) south to the Washington and Hamilton bridges. This priority project also includes expanding the greenway southward alongside High Bridge Yards to connect with points south along the Mott Haven and Port Morris waterfront areas.

MANHATTAN HARLEM RIVER GREENWAY {12.} – Four privately owned industrial lots along the Harlem River in the Inwood section of Manhattan would form a waterside promenade with fishing access.

QUEENS

JAMAICA BAY PROTECTION AREA {13.} ♦^ – A premier coastal habitat, including important marine and terrestrial ecosystems and a bird sanctuary, under the primary stewardship of the National Parks Service and Gateway National Recreation Area. Located in Brooklyn and Queens, it is also an important element in the Atlantic flyway. The area includes, but is not limited to the following parcels and other resources identified in the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan:

- **Hook Creek** – A freshwater creek and uplands within a large, city-owned tidal wetland in Queens.
- **LILCO Property at Beach 116th Street** – A large upland parcel that includes waterfront access.
- **Sea Girt Avenue Wetlands** – Tidal wetlands and ponds at the eastern end of the Rockaway peninsula.
- **Spring Creek/Fresh Creek** – A freshwater creek on the Brooklyn/Queens border.
- **Brant Point** – Parcels adjacent to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation's Brant Point Wildlife Sanctuary, identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*, published by the Trust for Public Land and New York City Audubon Society in 1992; would help consolidate and buffer the City's preserve and provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Dubos Point** – Shoreline adjacent to the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation's Dubos Point Wildlife Sanctuary along Jamaica Bay, identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*; would help consolidate and buffer already protected City-owned land and provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Mott Peninsula** – Shoreline parcels on Jamaica Bay that were identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*; would help provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Norton Peninsula** – Shoreline parcels on Jamaica Bay between NYC's Rockaway Community Park (former Edgemere landfill) and Bayswater Point State Park, identified in *Buffer the Bay Revisited*; would help consolidate already-protected state and city land, and provide public access to Jamaica Bay while preserving critical wildlife habitat.
- **Northeastern Queens Shoreline** – Unique and critical natural resources areas representing some of the last contiguous coastal habitats in this area.
- **Udall's Cove** – A tidal wetland preserve connected to Long Island Sound through Little Neck Bay.

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- **Udall's Ravine** – A ravine and stream corridor that are part of a larger wetland ecosystem.

KINGS/QUEENS

BROOKLYN/QUEENS EAST RIVER WATERFRONT {14.} – Open spaces and proposed greenways along the 20-mile waterfront from the Brooklyn Army Terminal to the Astoria Power Station will provide diverse and under-served neighborhoods with waterfront access and recreational opportunities. Properties include, but are not limited to:

- **Private properties needed to complete Bushwick Inlet Park**
- **Hallets Marina, Vernon Boulevard**
- **Con Edison, Northern Hunters Point**
- **The Grain Elevator Property**
- **Bush Terminal Piers (government-owned parcels)**
- **Williamsburg Bridge Park** (pending the relocation of existing City facilities)

RICHMOND

GREAT KILLS HARBOR – NELSON AVENUE WATERFRONT ADDITION {15.} – Approximately four acres of wooded natural land near the waterfront to expand Nelson Seaside Park. The barrier and shoreline of the Great Kills harbor is under primary stewardship of the National Parks Service.

HARBOR HERONS WILDLIFE COMPLEX {16.} ♦ ^– This wildlife complex includes tidal and freshwater marshes, a pond, and creeks located on the west and north shores of Staten Island. The complex also includes four islands in New York Harbor. Together, these support the largest breeding population of colonial water birds in the northeastern United States.

- **Graniteville Swamp/Old Place Creek** – A diverse 30-acre swamp forest which includes a wide range of habitats, a tidal marsh, a cattail marsh, and freshwater ponds, as well as feeding grounds for egrets and other wading birds (The New York/New Jersey Port Authority expressed concern regarding inclusion of this property on the priority list in relation to its plans for Goethal's Bridge).
- **Merrill's Creek** – A tidal wetland system north of Saw Mill Creek on the Arthur Kill.
- **Saw Mill Creek** – Tidal and freshwater marsh complex adjacent to Prall's Creek; includes critical habitat for state-threatened species.
- **Gulfport Marsh and Uplands** – Freshwater and tidal wetlands cover about 240 of the 625 acres of this parcel, a combination of two parcels previously known as the GATX and Duke Energy parcels and now known as the 380 Development site. The site provides nesting and foraging habitat for several significant species. It also provides some important open grassland habitat and a "corridor," or link, between Saw Mill Creek and Old Place Creek. Because the site includes a dock area that was used in the past, and may provide maritime access in the future, it may be appropriate to establish a corridor for access to that dock to accommodate some future water-dependent use on the eastern portion of the site near Gulf Avenue.
- **Little Fresh Kills** – A portion of 60 acres of upland and marsh buffering the shore against urban development can be protected by acquisition or conservation easement.
- **Neck Creek** – Tidal marsh area off the Arthur Kill.

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- **Cable Avenue Woods** – Patchy wet and upland forest community of 28 acres threatened by imminent development.
- **Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve Additions** – Located adjacent to Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve. Northeastern Woodland and Englewood Boundary Tract sites would provide additional buffer for the Park and protect it from development.
- **Blazing Star** – Located off Arthur Kill Road, this approximately 12-acre property consists of shipwrecks, mud flats, salt marsh, upland woods, and an historic cemetery. It provides significant habitat for many species of birds.
- **Sharrotts Road Shorelands** – An approximately 17-acre site consisting of woods, salt marsh and mudflats along the Arthur Kill. Tappens Creek, which originates in Clay Pit Pond State Park Preserve, flows through the property. A field of sunken barges lies off the shoreline, providing wildlife habitat.
- **Ellis Road** – A 57-acre property site.
- **Outerbridge Shorelands** – This approximately 30-acre site consists of forested upland and tidal wetland shoreline along the Arthur Kill, north and south of the Outerbridge Crossing.
- **Kriescher Cove** – This property consists of woodland, salt marsh and mud flats along the Arthur Kill. It provides habitat for colonial waterbirds, songbirds, amphibians and reptiles. Originally, the site included approximately 25 acres of open space, but much of it has been developed. There remains a 6-acre parcel in its natural state.
- **Port Mobil Swamp Forest and Tidal Wetlands** – This site consists of approximately 50 acres of forest with rare blackjack oak, persimmon and river birch, and ponds and shoreline surrounding Exxon Mobil's tank farm along the Arthur Kill. The property provides significant habitat for amphibians and reptiles.

INNER CITY/UNDER-SERVED COMMUNITY PARKS {17.} – This project will provide open space and recreational opportunities in densely populated urban areas with limited or no open space resources.

- **Con Edison 15th Street Ballfields** – A much-valued recreational resource, now in private hands, in an under-served area of Manhattan near the East River.
- **Greening Gray Neighborhoods** – Several vacant lots that would provide much needed green space in the communities of Harlem, Hunt's Point in the South Bronx and Bushwick, Brooklyn.
- **Jones Woods Playground Addition** – Wooded six-acre hillside with scenic views in an under-served neighborhood.
- **Travers Park Expansion** – The site of the Queens Borough Toyota Car Dealership located at 77-12 Northern Boulevard in Jackson Heights, Queens, in a community that is greatly under-served for open space.
- **Nicholas Avenue** – Nine and one-half acres, including some freshwater wetlands, located in the Port Richmond section of Staten Island.

LONG POND {18.} ◆

- **Long Pond** – A 90-acre natural wetland area on Staten Island; features knob and kettle topography and a diversity of habitats.

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- **MIV Triangle** – This five-acre parcel (block 6765, lot 1) located in Richmond County on Raritan Bay, would enhance public access to the Raritan Bay shoreline.

NEW YORK CITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION SITES {19.}

- **Brinkerhoff Cemetery** – Site of an old Queens family cemetery in Fresh Meadows.
- **Commandant's House** – Located in Kings County on Little Street, within the former Brooklyn Navy Yard. This house was built in 1807 and is currently on the National Register and New York City Landmarks List.
- **Klein Farm** – Located in Queens County at 73rd Avenue and 194th Street. The Klein Homestead was the last privately owned working farm in New York City. It remains an important vestige of Queens County's primarily agrarian past.
- **William H. Cornell Farmhouse** – Located in Little Neck, Queens, the site includes approximately 1.3 acres with a house and barn, plus outbuildings on an additional .25 acre on Little Neck Parkway.

NORTH SHORE WATERFRONT GREENWAY {20.} – This greenway, using a potential bicycle path route and existing and possibly future new open space areas, would create a continuous public waterfront pathway along the Kill Van Kull, from the area of Bay Street Landing, around the Staten Island Ferry, past Snug Harbor, to the area of Goethal's Bridge. This would provide for waterfront access and an added recreation element along the north shore of Staten Island.

STATEN ISLAND BLUEBELT {21.} – Located on the South Shore of Staten Island, this area serves as an alternative stormwater management system that incorporates existing streams and wetlands. Protecting these areas for stormwater conveyance will obviate the need for many miles of expensive sewer construction and provide aesthetically pleasing parks and greenways.

- **Richmond Creek Acquisitions** – A major drainage corridor; part of a freshwater wetlands system.
- **South Beach Northern Wetlands** – Sixty-five acres of former salt marsh that provide local flood control and wildlife habitat and would enlarge the scope of similar adjacent state land.
- **Oakwood Beach Bluebelt** – Various parcels located in the southeast section of Staten Island that would be appropriate for inclusion in the NYC Department of Environmental Protection's program for alternative stormwater management, using existing streams and wetlands, involving reduction in impervious surfaces, increased groundwater recharge and improvements to local habitat.

STATEN ISLAND GREENBELT {22.} ♦ – One of the largest urban nature preserves in the United States, this 2,500-acre natural area contains unique woodlands, wetlands, glacial ponds, open fields and one of the last remaining intact watersheds in New York City. The Greenbelt is a haven for wildlife and many migratory bird species.

- **Pouch Camp** – A large contiguous parcel containing the northernmost portion of the Greenbelt Watershed Preservation Area.
- **Reeds Basket Willow Swamp** – A heavily wooded, environmentally sensitive site located at the base of a steep ravine; contains streams and a vernal swamp.

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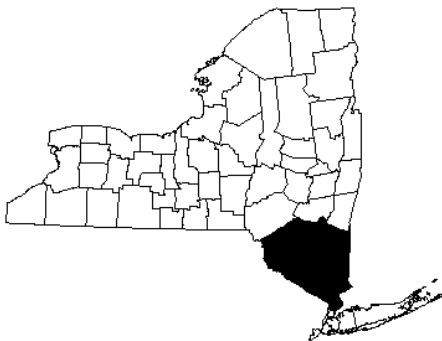
- **Great Swamp Forest Hill Greens** – This wooded slope would provide a buffer between a housing development and a protected freshwater wetland.

STATEN ISLAND WET WOODS {23.} ♦ – Moist hardwood forest in southern Staten Island that forms an intermediate community between maritime shrub forest and forested uplands. These properties contain ponds, streams, and wetlands, and include:

- **Arden Heights Woods Additions** – An addition to a 183-acre wildlife sanctuary.
- **Blue Heron Park Additions** – Freshwater wetlands and wildlife habitat; contiguous with an existing city park.
- **Canada Hill Forest** – Thirty-three acres of scarce “Sandy Ground” oak barrens buffering mapped freshwater wetlands.
- **Corson’s Brook Woods and Woodlands** – Undeveloped portion of former Willowbrook State School under the ownership of the state through the *NYS* Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, a 30-acre, west-facing wet woodland and uphill, adjacent 15-acre semi-mature woodland.
- **Outerbridge Ponds** – These 14 acres of pine-oak barrens and sedge ponds represent ecosystems rare in New York City.

STATEN ISLAND NORTHSHORE GREENBELT {24.} – Goodhue, a.k.a. The Children’s Aid Society, located in northeast Richmond County. This approximately 42-acre site consists of woods and freshwater wetlands and forms a link with Allison Pond and Jones Woods to Snug Harbor. Twenty-three acres remain under threat of development.

REGION 3/LOWER HUDSON VALLEY



With the lower Hudson River valley, the Hudson Highlands, the Palisades, Shawangunk Ridge, the Catskill Mountains, the flats of the Wallkill River and the Taconic range, the Lower Hudson Valley has an extremely diverse natural landscape. This region, including the Upper Hudson Valley or Capital Region (Region 4), is rich in wildlife habitat with 22 significant habitat types that support species of greatest conservation need (SGCN ♦). *It is also a remarkable historic landscape, which has evolved from the importance of the Hudson River as a natural corridor into

New York's interior. Some of the most spectacular scenery of the Hudson River is found at the bend through the mountains of the Hudson Highlands—scenery which has given the Hudson the nickname “the Rhine of North America.” Lower Revolutionary War sites, enormous river estates with castle-like mansions and the remnants of many former industries are testimony to the rich human history of the area.

*2006 NYSDEC Conservation Framework

To read the Region 3 Advisory Committee's full report, see: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html.

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BASHAKILL WETLAND SYSTEM {25.} ♦^ – The Bashakill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) consists of over 3,000 acres in the southeastern portion of Sullivan County in the Town of Mamakating. It runs along the western base of the Shawangunk Mountain Ridge and NYS Route 209 to the west and is the largest freshwater wetland in southeastern New York State. It is bisected by NYS Route 17/Future I-86. In the 2008 Sullivan County Open Space Plan, this area is designated as the priority area for biodiversity protection and is also designated as an Important Birding Area by the National Audubon Society and as a New York State Bird Conservation Area. Significant development pressure along Rt.17/Future I-86 and Rt.209, Sullivan County, threatens the water quality, vital habitat and scenic viewshed of the 3,000-acre Basha Kill Wetland area, as well as increased emissions from vehicular traffic, increased noise, and greater habitat fragmentation/disruption from future development. The area is home to over 200 species of birds, 30 varieties of fish, and 40 types of butterflies, as well as scores of plants, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and insects. Federally protected species call this area home, as do other endangered and threatened species and species of special concern. The surrounding valley, largely unprotected, is the “gateway to the Catskills” and contains some of the largest intact and globally important forest blocks, with some of the highest incidences of amphibian diversity in the state. Those lands that make up the viewsheds directly north of Route 209 and west of Route 17, and that extend directly west of the Bashakill WMA and north of Route 209, should be protected as should those properties within the Pine Kill Creek Corridor for habitat protection and flood prevention.

Priority areas include:

- **Water Quality/Quantity:** Development pressure along the NYS Route 209 corridor, as well as runoff from the Shawangunk Ridge and tributaries, including the Pine Kill, have a significant impact on this important eco-system. Also an important wetland system, it serves as a stormwater retention area that helps slow down and contain floodwaters, while recharging groundwater supplies.
- **Trail linkages:** The Basha Kill wetland system lies among several trail systems that should be enhanced and linked to. These include the O&W Rail Trail, D&H Canal Towpath, the Shawangunk Ridge Trail, and the Long Path trail system that links Sullivan County to the larger region. Also improving linkages to other publicly owned lands in the region would be beneficial to promote and expand access.

GREAT RONDOUT WETLANDS {26.} ♦ – Several large, mostly unprotected wetlands occur in the Rondout River watershed in the Ulster County Towns of Marbletown, Olive, Rochester and Wawarsing. Acquisition and/or easement projects should be pursued to protect these unique and important habitats. Most of these wetland areas contain unique or rare species or communities, and most are surrounded by extensive tracts of undeveloped forest land that could also be acquired as buffer areas. In addition, these areas often constitute a critical connection between the conservation areas in the Catskill and the Shawangunk Mountains. *Conservation efforts should focus on the following areas:*

- **Great Pacama Vly:** When considering biodiversity in the Catskill region, this wetland stands out as being a critical area in need of protection. Encompassing approximately 315 acres at the intersection of the Towns of Marbletown, Olive and Rochester, the Great Pacama Vly is the only site in the Catskills where black spruce is known to be found, and it harbors rare species and

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communities found nowhere else in the state. There is currently a 50-acre parcel of detached State Forest Preserve in the center of the wetland, which should be expanded to include the whole wetland and any buffer areas.

- ***Cedar Swamp***: These forested wetlands, totaling over 800 acres, lie to the east and west side of Dawe Road (also called Brandy Brook Road), south of the east end of the Rondout Reservoir. Perhaps the largest wetland of its kind in the Catskills, it contains trees that are 480 years old, as well as unique and rare communities and species. It is recognized as a unique and important conservation area by the NYS Natural Heritage Program.
- ***Beer Kill Wetlands/Cape Pond***: A large area of wetlands and open water south of Ulster Heights and the Cedar Swamp. Almost 600 acres of marsh areas surround the Beer Kill Creek, which can be canoed, flowing into the west end of Cape Pond. Cape Pond is predominantly undeveloped, with buildings only on the far eastern end. This area hosts a wide diversity of aquatic habitats and has great potential as a WMA, including waterfowl hunting and furbearer trapping opportunities.

GREAT SWAMP {27.} ♦^ – One of the three largest wetlands in New York, the Great Swamp (6,000 acres) stretches 20 miles south from the Towns of Dover and Pawling in Dutchess County, through the Towns of Patterson and Southeast in Putnam County. It is the largest and highest-quality red maple swamp in southern New York, but also has diverse habitats and biota associated with its marble bedrock and extensive perimeter and tributary wetlands. Much of the Great Swamp is within the Croton River Basin and flows directly into the East Branch Reservoir, a New York City reservoir, while the rest of it processes water for the north-flowing Swamp River in the Housatonic Basin.

The Great Swamp contains critical habitat for bird and aquatic species—nine of which are rare—protects and purifies the water supply for millions of New York residents, is an aquifer recharge area, moderates droughts, reduces flooding, and provides outstanding educational and recreational opportunities. The parallel north-south Highland ridges constrain the Great Swamp and funnel migratory birds through its exceptional stopover habitat. This topography also provides critical northward dispersal opportunities for biota as climate warming accelerates. However, because it is located only 60 miles north of Manhattan, development pressures are intense, making it necessary to safeguard this vital and fragile resource now from further development and associated runoff. To protect the unique habitat of the Great Swamp, the diverse range of wildlife it supports, its scenic value, and its critical function of water purification, *both* the wetlands and the surrounding uplands must be conserved. The extensive wetland edge of the elongated Great Swamp increases its vulnerability, as well as the challenge associated with conservation action. Nearly all the Great Swamp's 63,000-acre watershed has been identified by the USDA Forest Service as one of several Highlands Conservation Focal Areas, where three conditions coincide: a large contiguous tract or major cluster of (undeveloped) land; a high-priority composite conservation value; and an absence of permanent protection.

HUDSON VALLEY/NEW YORK CITY FOODSHED {28.} – With its prime agricultural soils, thousands of working farms, abundant transportation connections, and accessibility to Albany, New York City, and other population centers, farmland in the Hudson Valley comprises a vital component of the New York

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City/Hudson Valley “Foodshed,” an area with the potential to serve the growing demand for fresh local foods in the region. In addition to conserving the specific agricultural areas identified elsewhere in the Region 3 list of Priority Projects, protecting prime farmland soils throughout the Hudson Valley will help meet growing demand for locally produced food, enable the region’s agricultural economy to grow, and bolster the food security of the New York City metropolitan region and the Hudson Valley. Conserving the region’s farmland, which represents nearly 20% of the region’s land base, also will help conserve wildlife habitat and the region’s rural character.

Agriculture is an integral part of Region 3’s identity and is a source of cultural pride. These working landscapes represent some of the most materially threatened open space resources. Active, viable agricultural operations not only ensure open space, but also often provide undeveloped buffer areas to waterways in valley bottoms, reducing runoff and slowing down overland flow during rain events, both of which ameliorate flooding and erosion risks.

The New York City/Hudson Valley foodshed includes significant clusters of prime agricultural soils and productive farms. Some of these are highlighted in Scenic Hudson’s June 2013 report *Securing Fresh, Local Food for New York City and the Hudson Valley: A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region*. Others have been identified in county farmland protection plans and by local experts.

Priority farmland clusters include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **The Wallkill River Valley of Orange and Ulster counties**, including productive farmland in the Towns of Crawford, Gardiner, Goshen, Minisink, Montgomery, New Paltz, Newburgh, Plattekill, Wallkill, Warwick, and Wawayanda. (See Orange County Open Space Plan, July 2004: www.orangecountygov.com/filestorage/124/1362/1462/4586/4592/Chapter_IIC_Agriculture.pdf)
- **The Moodna Creek in Orange County** is flanked by hundreds of acres of farmland clustered within the Towns of Cornwall and Blooming Grove, where highly productive agricultural soils are found. The Woodbury Creek corridor is also actively farmed. Farms are varied and range from orchards to livestock farms. This agricultural landscape contributes greatly to the scenic and ecological value of the area.
- **The Rondout Valley of Ulster County**, including important farmland in the Towns of Wawarsing, Rochester, and Marbletown, and the “Catskill–Shawangunk Greenway” area in Wawarsing, which would link the Catskill Forest Preserve with the Shawangunk Ridge, including farmland owned by the State of New York Department of Corrections and Community Services;
- **The Ulster County “Fruit Belt”** of Marlborough and Lloyd, a region of unique soils and micro-climate that make this a prime area for the cultivation of grapes, stone fruit crops, apples and vegetables.
- **The Esopus Creek Watershed/Sawkill – Esopus Creek Corridor**, which includes areas with rich agricultural soils whose conservation would additionally help to prevent or mitigate flood damage to downstream communities, protect portions of the City of Kingston reservoir system, and continues northward through the Bokoven and Kiskatom valleys, before entering Greene County. It also includes prime agricultural soils and floodplain lands of the scenic east–west Beaverkill and Little Beaverkill valleys.
- **Dutchess County’s important agricultural areas**, as identified on the *Agricultural Priority Areas* map in the county’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The map can be found on page 47 of the plan, which can be found at the Dutchess County Cooperative Extension website at

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<http://ccedutchess.org/perch/resources/2015-dutchess-county-agricultural-and-farmland-protection-plan.pdf>.

- **Sullivan County's important agricultural areas** include areas within the Delaware River Highlands, the New York City Watershed Lands, the Catskill Unfragmented Forest, the Catskill River and Road Corridors, and the Lower Neversink River Valley. For more detailed information on agricultural priority areas within Sullivan County, please see *Conserving Open Space & Managing Growth: A Strategy for Sullivan County, NY*. (<http://co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/DepartmentsNZ/PlanningandEnvironmentalManagement/OpenSpaceProtection/tabid/3749/Default.aspx>).
- **Westchester County's Agricultural District** includes over 100 farms and 7,000 acres of land, including successful equine operations, vegetable and fruit crops, and livestock operations that are in high demand and economically viable. The highest priority for farmland protection in Westchester is the farmland in the Croton Watershed in the northern part of the county, a key drinking water supply for New York City and the county. This is where the greatest convergence of multiple public benefits exists: scenic character, blocks of farmed land and protection of drinking water quality. Much of the growth in production agriculture within Westchester is generated from smaller scale Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations or commercial farms of similarly small scale, mostly located on leased properties. Should development pressures increase, significant efforts will be needed to protect them. In particular, high priority should be given to conserving the 155-acre Stuart's Farm in Somers, the oldest working farm in Westchester County, which has been in the same family since the 1750s and has a clear family succession plan. It was awarded recognition as a New York Century Farm in 1972 and is part of one of the most important protected wildlife corridors in the county. In addition, it is an important resource in protecting the water quality of the Croton Reservoir system.
- **Rockland County's important agricultural lands** include four remaining active farms. These farms represent Rockland's remaining link to agriculture, producing corn, squash and several varieties of apples. Thousands of New York City residents come to pick their own apples each year. Where landowners are willing, efforts should be made to ensure protection of these farms from development.

KARST AQUIFER REGION {29.} – The Karst Aquifers are situated in a narrow band of carbonate rocks that extend through Ulster County, generally trending south-southwest through portions of the Towns of Saugerties, and Ulster, the City of Kingston, and the towns of Esopus, Marbletown, Rosendale, Rochester and Wawarsing, and into the Sullivan County Town of Mamakating and the Orange County Town of Deerpark. Additionally, similar bands dominate portions of the landscape in the Towns of Goshen, Minisink, Warwick and Wawayanda in Orange County. This landscape feature is characterized by caves, sinkholes, mines, springs, lakes and disappearing streams. The area is rich in biological, geological and historical resources, and provides diverse outdoor recreational opportunities and critical water reserves. In many locations, outcroppings and ridges are very visible from roads and community centers and could have important scenic value to local communities and visitors. Several scenic byways,

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heritage trails, and bike trails have been designated within and within sight of this region and would benefit from permanent protection of their viewsheds.

LONG ISLAND SOUND COASTAL CORRIDOR {30.} ♦^ – The corridor extends along Westchester County's marine shoreline from the Bronx River Parkway east to the Connecticut border on Long Island Sound. The area includes, but is not limited to, an array of natural and historical resources and public access and recreation opportunities on Long Island Sound, including those recommended in the Long Island Sound Coastal Management Program, Local Waterfront Revitalization programs and DEC's *Marine Recreation Fishing Access Plan*. Representative sites within this area include but are not limited to: Edith Read Buffer, David's Island and Huckleberry Island.

- **Edith Read Buffer:** Also known as Manursing Island, this 14-acre area is important for protecting the Edith Read Wildlife Sanctuary in Westchester County.
- **Huckleberry Island:** Lying northeast of New Rochelle Harbor in Westchester County, the island serves as a waterfowl refuge.
- **David's Island:** Located in the City of New Rochelle, Westchester County, this 120-acre island property (77.8 acres above water) on the Long Island Sound is characterized by a shoreline of tidal wetlands and approximately 125 buildings in various states of deterioration. Restoring public access to the island and establishing areas of protected open space would provide a unique recreational opportunity, enhance the quality of the Long Island Sound, and protect an exceptional piece of open space in a densely developed portion of Westchester County.

LOWER NEVERSINK RIVER VALLEY {31.} – This area encompasses the Neversink River from when it leaves the Neversink Reservoir and runs south through Sullivan and Orange counties to its confluence with the Delaware River. This “eco-region” contains significant natural attractions and resources, hunting and fishing opportunities and wildlife habitat (including bald eagle nesting areas), as well as many scenic viewsheds and recreational opportunities. It is also inundated with seasonal flooding, and efforts should be made to preserve the floodplain along the Neversink River to accommodate floodwaters and to protect habitat and infrastructure. Existing and proposed trail linkages should be focused on, including but not limited to the D&H Canal and the O&W Rail Trail, as well as linkages with other priority areas, including the Catskill River & Road Corridors, Shawangunk Mountains, Basha Kill Wetland System, Upper Delaware Highlands and the Catskill Park. Conservation efforts should include the following:

- **Tomsco Falls:** A Sullivan County area attraction consisting of beautiful waterfalls, hemlock forest, meadows/lawn, viewing areas, two buildings, and rail bed with a former trestle site. The 200-plus acre property also includes significant access to Sandburg Creek, an excellent trout fishing stream. This site would also help create a connection between the Shawangunk and Catskill regions. Several miles of the old O&W railroad bed offer great opportunities for multiple-use trail linkages.
- **Neversink Gorge vicinity:** The Neversink River Unique Area in Sullivan County consists of the 4,881-acre Neversink River Unique Area and the 585-acre Wolf Brook Multiple Use Area. It encompasses a portion of the Neversink River that flows through a narrow channel and over beautiful waterfalls. Opportunities still exist to greatly expand the Unique Area to include a large wetland and

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headwater stream area to the east, unfragmented forest lands to the west, open areas to the south, and forested lands to the north to Holiday Mountain Ski Area along Rt.17/Future I-86. New additions would provide better public access.

- **Harlen Swamp Wetland Complex:** There are several mapped and regulated wetlands located on the border of the Towns of Thompson and Mamakating, Sullivan County (between Wild Turnpike and County Route 56) that together provide important habitat for a variety of wetland species. Several large, undeveloped parcels are currently threatened with development in this area. The recent acquisition of approximately 155 acres in the Town of Thompson by the YMCA of Middletown/Sullivan County for the purpose of creating an environmental education camp suggests there is an opportunity to conserve habitat and other open space values on the property.

NEW YORK HIGHLANDS {32.} ♦^ – The Highlands are a unique physiographic region running through the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. The USDA Forest Service has analyzed and documented this area as a high priority for conservation efforts, and the federal Highlands Conservation Act of 2004 (reauthorized in 2015) codifies its status as a “nationally significant landscape,” with federal funding authorized for further conservation protection. The New York Highlands are characterized by forested ridges, rocky outcrops, pristine streams and wetlands, special geologic features, and exceptional scenic vistas. They are located in the densely populated New York metropolitan area. They provide and protect water for millions of New York and New Jersey residents.

The Highlands contain numerous state-owned historic sites, State Parks, DEC management units and State Forests, and NYC Watershed Lands. These public resources are not only ecological jewels and critical habitats, but they are also recreational destinations and economic catalysts. Hundreds of thousands enjoy these public resources annually, and they inject funds into local economies and support jobs. West of the Hudson River, these public resources include Sterling Forest, Harriman, Bear Mountain, Storm King Mountain, Goosepond Mountain, and Schunemunk Mountain State Parks. East of the Hudson River, public resources include Hudson Highlands, Clarence Fahnestock Memorial, FDR, and Wonder Lake State Parks, NYC East-of-Hudson watershed lands, and DEC areas, such as Mount Ninham, the Great Swamp, and Cranberry Mountain.

The Highlands also contain preserves and habitat owned by non-profit organizations and private entities, including the Open Space Institute, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Scenic Hudson, and Black Rock Forest Consortium. These lands, many of which are open to the public, protect thousands of acres of habitat and numerous important species, and provide important connections to state and agency-owned properties.

Priority will be given to connections of existing protected lands on both sides of the Hudson River and to the creation of a corridor comprising State Parks, DEC lands and other lands that span the length of the Highlands in New York. These preservation efforts will also provide additional protection for the Shawangunk and Taconic Ridges, the Great Swamp, and NYC Watershed Lands which lie within and adjacent to the Highlands. Priority also will be given to lands identified as Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (New York State Department of State), Biologically Important Areas (BIA—NYSDEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program), Critical Environmental Areas, and Audubon-designated

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Important Bird Areas. Some of these designated areas in the Highlands include the following estuarine and terrestrial BIAs: Fishkill Creek, Moodna Creek, Breakneck Ridge, Constitution Marsh, Con Hook, Camp Smith, Anthony's Nose, and Annsville Creek.

Some of the most important and representative areas within the New York Highlands include but are not limited to:

Highlands West of Hudson River

- **Goosepond Mountain** – Lands adjacent to the 1,650-acre, wooded Goosepond Mountain State Park in Chester, Orange County, are threatened by immediate and intense development pressure. Goosepond Mountain is also part of the Moodna Creek Watershed, which is a biodiversity hotspot.
- **Ramapo Mountains and Watershed** – The Ramapo Mountains are Rockland County's Highlands, and parts of the Ramapos are permanently protected within the 44,000-acre Harriman State Park. The Ramapo River Watershed is an irreplaceable regional water supply, recreational resource and key ecosystem in the Highlands. The Ramapo Valley Aquifer—listed as a federal Sole Source Aquifer in 1992—supplies a third of Rockland County's public water supply and over two-million people derive all or part of their water supply from the Ramapo River Basin. The Forest Service has identified this as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. Of special importance is a large property in the drainage basin of the Nakoma Brook, which is a tributary of the Ramapo River. This property is located in a "High Conservation Value" area identified in the federal Highlands Study of 2002.
- **Greater Sterling Forest** – In Orange County, nearly 20,000 acres of contiguous open space have been preserved through public/private partnerships. Additional targets for protection include holdings and buffers. Continuation of successful preservation efforts in Sterling Forest is critical to maintain the rich biodiversity and diverse habitats this ecosystem and vital watershed provides. Preservation of property on the northern border will add over 300 acres of important buffer lands.
- **Torne Valley** – This area includes historic Torne Mountain and is adjacent to Harriman State Park. The Forest Service has identified this as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. Due to the preservation efforts of Rockland County, Town of Ramapo and Palisades Interstate Park Commission, significant portions of Torne Valley have been preserved. Two remaining undeveloped parcels encompassing 60 acres remain to be protected.
- **Harriman State Park Expansion** – The privately owned lands located adjacent to the NYS Thruway and Harriman State Park in the Towns of Woodbury and Tuxedo, Orange County would expand the northwestern area of the park and preserve a scenic vista from the Thruway.

Highlands East of Hudson River

- **Croton-to-Highlands Biodiversity Area** – The Towns of Putnam Valley in Putnam County, and Cortlandt, Yorktown, and New Castle in Westchester County have been recognized for their high biodiversity value by the Wildlife Conservation Society/Metropolitan Conservation Alliance (MCA). MCA's biodiversity plan, published in 2004, delineates those areas it determined are suitable for development and those areas that contain species vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and should be a priority for acquisition. This area of the Croton Reservoir system has also been identified by the USDA Forest Service as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. Biodiversity areas in this plan,

such as the Teatown Lake Reservation, contain significant biological resources despite occurring in an increasingly stressed landscape. Conservation efforts in this region should focus on the active management of these areas as well as maintaining connectivity with other areas to ensure ecological integrity of the entire region.

- **Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park/Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve/Fishkill Ridge/Scofield Ridge** – Located in the northwest and central portion of Putnam County and the southern edge of Dutchess County, this area contains large blocks of nearly contiguous upland forests, significant reservoirs for several municipalities, and the watershed of the Clove/Fishkill Creek, which is a principal aquifer. The over 14,000-acre Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park in Putnam County, much of which has been undisturbed for over 100 years, offers exceptional ecological and recreational value, and provides habitat for a variety of species, some threatened, that otherwise could not exist in such a developed region of New York State. More than 10,000 acres of the park have been designated as a Bird Conservation Area, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail passes through the park. Fahnestock lies in proximity to Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve, which encompasses over 7,000 acres, including Bull Hill and parts of Breakneck Ridge. There are significant undeveloped, upland forest tracts adjacent to and in-holdings within both parks that would enhance and expand the natural resource protection objectives of these areas, and establish linkages with other upland parcels along Breakneck, Scofield and Fishkill ridges. Protection of lands in this ecologically rich area is necessary to provide important linkages, especially between Fahnestock and the northern end of the Hudson Highlands, as well as protect the scenic viewshed of both the Highlands and the Hudson River. The USDA Forest Service has identified this as a Highlands Conservation Focal Area. In addition to the region's high conservation value, over 400,000 visitors come to the state parks each year, with Breakneck Ridge consistently rated as one of the most popular hiking destinations in America.
- **Hudson Highlands State Park South/Camp Smith** – This area provides panoramic views across the Highlands and of the New York City skyline. Straddling the Putnam and Westchester County lines, this area is a state-designated scenic area and is a critical viewshed for numerous parks, Revolutionary War historic sites, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail traverses a portion of this area on lands protected by the National Park Service. The southern portion of Hudson Highlands State Park connects the Appalachian Trail to Anthony's Nose and to the Camp Smith Trail extending into Westchester County. Additional opportunities to protect and expand these resources to the east, north and south will further enhance recreational opportunities in this area. The Camp Smith Reservation is a candidate for inclusion in the New York State Nature and Historical Reserve Trust.
- **Northern Putnam Greenway** – Extending from the Taconic Ridge on the east to the Hudson River on the west, this proposed greenway is a necessary connecting step within the Highlands region. It would help maintain the region's ecological integrity by protecting wildlife bio-corridors, preserving scenic viewsheds in an area of high-growth pressure, protecting the purity of the area's groundwater and of the headwaters of the NYC Croton water supply system, and by helping to meet the increasing demand for outdoor recreational and education opportunities. It would allow for completion of the Highlands Trail, creating a connected network of long-distance and local

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trails. By connecting the following protected properties, the Northern Putnam Greenway can be realized: Ciaiola County Conservation Area – Cranberry Mountain WMA – Great Swamp WMA – Ice Pond Preserve – Wonder Lake State Park – Horse Pound Brook Area – Big Buck MUA – White Pond MUA – Ninham Mountain MUA – Lockwood Pond Area – California Hill State Forest – Boyd Corner North Area – West Branch Headwaters Area – Fahnestock State Park – Hudson Highlands State Park.

NORTHEASTERN WESTCHESTER WATERSHED AND BIODIVERSITY LANDS {33.} ♦ ^– The Towns of Lewisboro, Pound Ridge, Bedford, and North Castle in Westchester County contain important public water supply watersheds, covering approximately 23,000 acres, for the Village of Mount Kisco and for Norwalk, Stamford and Greenwich, Connecticut. These watershed lands drain into seven reservoirs and the Silvermine, Rippowam, Mill, and Mianus Rivers. This area includes:

- Approximately one-quarter of the Eastern Westchester Biotic Corridor (EWBC), a regionally important biodiversity area of 22,000 acres defined by the Wildlife Conservation Society/Metropolitan Conservation Alliance. (Approximately three-quarters of the EWBC are encompassed in the Open Space Conservation Plan’s New York City Watershed priority area).
- The 738-acre Mianus River Gorge Preserve, which was the first Natural Historic Landmark designated by the federal government.
- Approximately 2,000 acres of water supply protection lands mostly held by the privately owned company that supplies Stamford’s water.

Acquisition of strategic parcels would further protect public water supplies; keep the EWBC intact and prevent it from being severed from its hub (Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, a 4,700-acre county nature preserve); and provide links to trail networks throughout the area. Voters in each of the four towns approved open space ballot propositions in recent years. In addition, each town has compiled a land protection priority list and has indicated willingness to work with New York State and other funders on acquisition projects.

PLUTARCH/BLACK CREEK WETLANDS COMPLEX {34.} ♦ – This project encompasses a very large wetland complex and stream corridors in the Ulster County Towns of Esopus, Lloyd and New Paltz, which is important because of its size and variety. It includes the Plutarch Swamp and other nearby wetlands associated with the Swarte Kill and Black Creek drainages, as well as associated uplands for buffers, access and management. These wetlands provide habitat for numerous wetland-dependent wildlife species, including critical habitat for the threatened northern cricket frog. The area is important for breeding and migrating waterfowl and river otters. It includes significant and rare ecological communities, including one of the largest dwarf shrub bog occurrences in the Hudson River Valley and one of the most bio-diverse tributaries to the Hudson River—the Black Creek—due in large part to lack of development. The area also could provide significant recreational opportunities, including canoeing, hiking, observing wildlife, fishing, hunting and trapping. A recent victory was the creation by DEC of the 600-acre Black Creek State Forest just north of Chodikee Lake. There is the potential to build on the success of the nearby Walkway Over the Hudson and grow the local outdoor recreation economy through linking the Walkway and the Hudson Valley Rail Trail to the John Burroughs Black Creek Corridor, a continuous water/land corridor along the Black Creek that incorporates such public open

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space amenities as the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary, Black Creek State Forest, Chodikee Lake and Scenic Hudson's Black Creek Preserve.

ROCKLAND RIVERFRONT COMMUNITIES/PALISADES RIDGE {35.} ♦ – The Palisades Ridge is a narrow ridge located along the western shore of the Hudson River in northeastern New Jersey and southeastern New York. It begins in New Jersey and continues north within the Villages/Hamlets of Palisades, Sparkill, Grandview, Upper Grandview, Nyack, and Upper Nyack. It passes through Rockland Lake State Park, then goes north through Haverstraw, where it pivots westward through High Tor State Park and South Mountain County Park. It then terminates in Gurnee County Park. The Palisades Ridge ranges in altitude from 500 to 700 feet. It is located within two main watersheds: 1) the Hudson River Watershed, and 2) the Upper Hackensack River watershed and four sub-watersheds: 1.) the Sparkill Creek, 2.) the West Branch Hackensack River, 3.) the Lower Branch Hackensack River, and 4.) the Minisceongo Creek.

The Hackensack River watershed, along with the sub-watersheds of the same name, flow into Lake DeForest, a United Water NY public drinking water reservoir, which serves Rockland County, NY and Bergen County, NJ. Therefore, all watersheds and sub-watersheds of the Palisades Ridge need special consideration and protection because they drain into: 1) the Hudson, a NYSDEC-designated Priority Waterbody; 2) Class A wetlands; or 3) Lake DeForest, a critical drinking water supply. There are many other values of the Palisades Ridge. The Long Path Hiking Trail follows along the entire length of the Palisades Ridge. Along the Ridge are important wildlife habitat areas, Hudson River and inland wetlands (the Class A wetlands mentioned above), and scenic vistas, including the Tappan Zee Scenic District and designated Critical Environmental Areas.

The Palisades Ridge and its scenic vistas, recreational uses, important watershed for public water supply and Lower Hudson River drainage must remain the focus of preservation efforts. High Tor connects the Palisades Ridge and the Rockland Highlands, and opportunities exist to secure additional sections of prominent, steeply sloping talus and woodlands adjacent to High Tor State Park.

SCHUNNEMUNK MOUNTAIN/MOODNA CREEK/WOODCOCK MOUNTAIN/HUDSON HIGHLANDS

CONNECTIVITY PROJECT {36.} ♦ – Schunnemunk Mountain, the tallest in Orange County, supports rare plants, animals, and ecological communities, while parts of the Moodna Creek and its watershed have been designated as “irreplaceable” Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats by the NY State Coastal Zone Management Program. The marsh at the mouth of Moodna Creek is significant habitat for rare plants and contains rare natural communities, including brackish intertidal mudflats and brackish tidal marsh, and Knox's Headquarters State Historic Site is adjacent to this important tributary to the Hudson River. This area is also a Mecca for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts and contains a seven-mile stretch of the Long Path. It has exceptional scenic value, particularly where the Moodna Viaduct crosses through the valley at the north end of Schunnemunk Mountain. The ridgeline of this mountain provides unparalleled views up and down the Hudson River to the east and the Shawangunk Ridge and Catskill Mountains to the west. The Schunnemunk Mountain State Park was established in 2004 with the

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acquisition of 2,467 acres that included Schunnemunk Mountain and the scenic agricultural fields at its base.

Access to Schunnemunk Mountain is made possible by the Long Path and a series of other public parking areas and trails, some of which pass through a unique collection of large ridgetop rocks known as “megaliths.” Orange County maintains Gonzaga Park at the southern tip of Schunnemunk Mountain. This 216-acre county park provides access to the Long Path. It is a substantial but isolated tract of protected land; a large portion of Schunnemunk Mountain, mainly on the southern and western sides, remains unprotected. There is also a significant gap of unprotected land between Gonzaga Park and the State Park. Natural features adjacent to Schunnemunk Mountain that are worthy of conservation include Woodcock Mountain, Tobias Hill and the Woodbury Creek corridor.

- **Hudson Highlands Connectivity Project** – Several organizations have begun a multi-year initiative known as the Hudson Highlands Connectivity Project. The goal of the project is to create a wildlife corridor between the biologically rich core of the western Hudson Highlands (Black Rock Forest, Storm King Mountain State Park, and the West Point Military Academy (while closed to the public, the Academy owns approximately 16,000 acres) and Schunnemunk Mountain State Park (SMSP). This corridor is currently 95% forested, and its protection will provide permanent connectivity and vital migration routes that will link existing hubs of conserved land. As the environment continues to change, protected corridors like this will become increasingly vital to ensuring plants and animals have the room to disperse and migrate. Other project benefits include enhancing recreational access, protecting critical watershed and wetlands that recharge groundwater and control flooding, and conserving high-quality streams with breeding trout populations, such as Mineral Springs Brook, Trout Brook, and Woodbury Creek.

In this critical area, several roads have been designated as scenic byways by the state, state parks have identified scenic vistas, and the entire Hudson shoreline extending into the hills is part of the Hudson Highlands Scenic Area of Statewide Significance. Currently most of the lands between SMSP and Black Rock Forest are in private hands. While the largest of these vacant parcels, the 702-acre Legacy Ridge property, was purchased by the Open Space Institute in March 2013, many future land acquisition projects aim to protect relatively small parcels ranging from 10 to 50 acres.

SHAWANGUNK MOUNTAINS REGION {37.} ♦ ^– The Shawangunk Mountains are a distinctive part of the Appalachian Mountains and are located in Ulster, Orange and Sullivan counties. This geologically unique mountain region is one of New York’s iconic landscape features, and about 400,000 visitors annually use the more than 100 miles of trails and 90 miles of carriage roads for hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, horseback riding, and nature study. Trails in the Shawangunks are part of larger regional trail networks. The 36-mile Shawangunk Ridge Trail connects the Appalachian Trail (near High Point State Park in New Jersey) with the 330-mile Long Path shortly before the Long Path enters the Catskills. The Shawangunks are also recognized as a world-class rock-climbing destination.

Together public and private entities have protected more than 30,000 acres in the Northern Shawangunks, including Minnewaska State Park Preserve (22,000 acres), Sam’s Point Preserve (an

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approximately 5,000-acre National Natural Landmark managed by The Nature Conservancy and owned by the Open Space Conservancy), and the 7,500-acre Mohonk Preserve. The Mohonk Mountain House resort (1,200 acres) is a National Historic Landmark and a regional anchor for heritage and ecotourism.

The publicly accessible recreational opportunities in the Shawangunks exemplify the “quality of life” benefits of conservation investment for people, as well as solid economic return. A recent economic study (2010) conducted by The Mohonk Preserve, The Nature Conservancy and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation revealed that the three major preserves serve as important economic engines, driving local tourism and contributing \$12.3 million to the local economy, while supporting 350 local jobs.

The Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway was designated by New York in 2006 as a NYS Scenic Byway, offering visitors to our region another way to enjoy the unique scenery and other tourism amenities around the Shawangunks. The Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Region is a distinctive 134,000-acre area encircling the northern Shawangunk Mountains defining the corridor of the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway, an 82-mile network of designated highways. The Byway goals are to provide economic growth through a tourism distribution strategy, to improve transportation, and to preserve the scenic, natural, recreational and historic resources of the region. Implementation of the Corridor Management Plan is the responsibility of the Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership, an inter-municipal organization consisting of the nine towns and two villages that participate in the Byway.

The Corridor Management Plan, and the Regional Open Space Plan, developed by the partnership with the cooperation of many conservation and community groups, identifies goals, key strategies and projects for preservation of the region’s intrinsic resources. Particular importance is given in these plans to protection of the northern Shawangunks, which is the centerpiece of the byway, and key scenic and natural lands in the Wallkill and Rondout valleys of the region. Additionally, through the cooperative effort of the towns, DOT and the Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership, restoration and enhancement of the scenic overlooks and pull-offs will provide interpretive wayfinding experiences along the Byway.

Natural Resources and Biodiversity Values – Protection of the Shawangunks is critical to maintaining the input of high-quality water to the Rondout and Wallkill valleys. Five “sky lakes” along the northern part of the ridge are headwaters to streams that join the Rondout and Wallkill rivers, both tributaries to the Hudson River. In the southern Shawangunks, streams originating on the ridgetop flow east to the Shawangunkkill, a designated Wild and Scenic River, and west of the 3,000-acre Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area, the largest freshwater wetland complex in southeastern New York State.

The Shawangunk Mountains are the northern section of a 256-mile-long Kittatinny-Shawangunk Ridge and Corridor that runs from Pennsylvania through New Jersey to southern New York. The Nature Conservancy has identified the northern Shawangunks as a globally significant forest block, home to exemplary natural communities, including the globally rare dwarf pine ridge community, over 7,000 acres of pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit, one of the largest chestnut oak forests (38,000 acres) in New York, extensive northern hardwood forests, and cliff, talus and ice cave communities. Within these communities are over 57 known rare or imperiled plant and animal species.

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The Shawangunks are part of the Appalachian Raptor Migration Corridor and Sam's Point Preserve, Minnewaska State Park Preserve and the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area are all designated Important Bird Areas by National Audubon and Bird Conservation Areas by New York State. Taken together, these elements of biodiversity make the Shawangunks one of the highest priority areas for biodiversity conservation in the northeastern United States.

Consistent and ecologically sensitive management of the parks and preserves along the Shawangunks is coordinated by the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership, a 12-member collaboration of public and private agencies and land managers formed in 1994, dedicated to the protection and restoration of the natural communities of the Shawangunks on a landscape scale.

Landscape Connectivity – The Shawangunk Mountains are in proximity to other significant biodiversity areas identified as priorities in this plan, including the Karst Aquifer Area, the Catskill Mountains, the Basha Kill Wetlands Complex, the Great Rondout Wetlands, the Shawangunk Grasslands, the Plutarch/Esopus Wetlands and the Wallkill River Valley. Stream corridors, flood plains areas, forest blocks, wetland complexes and agricultural lands that can provide natural linkages between the Shawangunks and these features should be considered as priorities for protection, in order to create wildlife migration corridors and to provide flood control, habitat and trail connections across an increasingly developed landscape.

An 8,000-acre goal for protection of agricultural lands in the Rondout and Wallkill valleys has recently been established. A prime example of these linkages is the Catskill–Shawangunk Greenway in the Rondout Valley in the Town of Wawarsing along the Route 209 corridor. Protection of extensive floodplain areas and priority undeveloped agricultural lands (NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision) and forest tracts could create connectivity for wildlife and protect floodplains that serve to mitigate the impacts of flooding, and would support an extensive trail system, linking the D&H Canal Trail and the Shawangunk Ridge Trails to the Catskill Mountains, while stimulating tourism-based economic activity, including agritourism, in Wawarsing. Similarly, on the east side of the Northern Shawangunks is the important connection between the Wallkill Valley and the Mohonk Preserve Foothills, which will protect slope forest, riparian tributaries and wetlands. This conservation priority will also foster scenic view and farmland protection, connectivity for recreation and eco-permeability from the valley to the Ridge as part of the whole large-scale landscape approach. Other examples include a Shawangunk/Karst Aquifer connection surrounding the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in the Towns of Rosendale and Ulster, the Verkeerderkill/Shawangunkill/Shawangunk Grasslands connection in Shawangunk, and the Basha Kill Wetlands/Shawangunks connection and Neversink Highlands/Shawangunk connection in Sullivan County.

Protection Priorities:

- **Northern Shawangunks** – Protection of approximately 12,500 additional acres of land is needed to protect biodiversity and scenic and recreational values of the Northern Shawangunks. Highest priority projects include Peterskill Gorge, Sanders Kill Area, Witch's Hole/Stonykill Falls Area, Palmaghatt Ravine–Millbrook–Bayards–Near Trapps Escarpment, Trapps Gateway, the Verkeerderkill

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Falls/Sam's Point Preserve area and other areas listed above that link the Shawangunks to other nearby conservation priorities.

- **Southern Shawangunks** – Protection of the Southern Shawangunks in Orange and Sullivan counties will enable a greenway corridor for recreation and biodiversity conservation, extending from Sam's Point Preserve to the New Jersey state line, completing the protection and buffer for the 30-mile-long Shawangunk Ridge Trail corridor. Efforts continue to protect the ridge top and both its western and eastern slopes and bases, which contain the NYS Bashakill Wildlife Management Area. Important projects are linkages between the Shawangunk Ridge State Forest through the Roosa Gap to the Wurtsboro Ridge State Forest lands, including protection to Route 17; linking Wurtsboro Ridge to the BashaKill Wildlife Management Area; linking south of Basha Kill to Guymard Lake; and links south to Highpoint State Park in NJ. The ridge contains remnants of the historic Delaware and Hudson Canal and the New York, Ontario and Western Railroad, offering opportunities for linking existing trail networks in these parts to other rail trail projects and historic/cultural tourism in Sullivan County and beyond. The most vulnerable portion of the ridgetop is a 20-mile stretch from Route 17 to the New Jersey State Line, east of Route 209, in the Towns of Mamakating, Greenville, Mount Hope and Deer Park. Scenic values are threatened by the planned extension of the Route 17/(future) I-86 and development pressure along the ridge and in the vicinity.

WALLKILL VALLEY {38.} ♦^ – The Wallkill River begins in the mountains of northern New Jersey and enters New York via the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge on the NY/NJ border. From there, it flows through the fertile black dirt region of southern Orange County and then winds through a variety of landscapes, some amazingly rich in biodiversity and productive farmland, joining the Rondout just south of the City of Kingston, Ulster County, a short distance from its confluence with the Hudson. It provides excellent opportunities for recreational fishing and boating. A Southern Wallkill Biodiversity Plan (Wildlife Conservation Society/Metropolitan Conservation Alliance) identifies critical areas in need of protection. In addition, counties, local municipalities and NGOs completed a Wallkill River Watershed Management Plan. Through these planning processes, open space priorities have been identified for future protection measures.

The Shawangunk National Wildlife Refuge (Galeville Grasslands) and surrounding agricultural landscape in southern Ulster County and northern Orange County provide an area of rare grassland habitat large enough to support a suite of grassland-dependent birds, including short-eared owls, northern harriers, upland sandpipers, vesper sparrows, grasshopper sparrows and many others. Audubon recognizes this area as an Important Bird Area. This area also provides significant recreational opportunities, including hiking, bird watching and hunting. Opportunities to conserve additional lands in this area should be pursued.

REGIONS 3 & 4

CATSKILL RIVER AND ROAD CORRIDORS {39.} ♦^ – On a daily basis, thousands of people use major travel corridors such as Rt. 28, Rt. 212, Rt. 214, Rt. 23, Rt. 23A, Rt. 42, Rt. 30, Rt. 10, Rt. 17 (future Interstate 86), and Rt. 97 to access numerous Catskill communities and popular recreation destinations. Because these major travel corridors generally follow major river corridors, they provide

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visitors with a memorable first impression of the Catskill/Delaware region as a vital riverine habitat. Some of these river corridors are not only particularly important as fisheries resources, but they are also exceptional recreational resources that provide immeasurably to the region's nature-based economy. Unfortunately, many sections of these river and road corridors are experiencing an increase in development which has resulted in severely damaging flood incidents, some of which have proven fatal. Land protection priority should be given to parcels that protect riparian buffer land, preserve or restore flood plain areas, protect scenic areas and vistas along principle road corridors and on visible ridgelines, protect flood-prone areas and enhance public access and recreational opportunities.

Region 3/4 Focus Areas include the following:

- **Beaverkill/Willowemoc/Route 17 (future Interstate 86) Corridor:** The watershed for these two famous trout streams is located in western Sullivan and southern Delaware counties. The watershed is currently largely forested, with development limited to areas in the vicinity of villages and hamlets. Providing expanded access to the headwaters area of both streams would enhance the recreational and economic value of these resources for local communities and the region. Protection of the watershed is important for the high-quality trout fisheries here, which are dependent on abundant, cold, pure water. This area is also inundated with flood waters, and recently the Army Corp of Engineers completed a feasibility study to address future flooding, with mitigation actions such as wetland creation and floodplain management strategies that are being explored.
- **Delaware River Branches and Main Stem Corridors:** The region encompassing the Delaware River corridor is identified in the Open Space Plan as a Major Greenway and Recreationway in Regions 3, 4 and 7. The entire Delaware River corridor from Hancock (Delaware County) to Cherry Island (Orange County) is designated as a National Scenic and Recreational River and is the only National Park Service (NPS) area in New York State of this scale and integrity. The East and West Branches of the Delaware River, as well as the main stem of the Delaware River, are exceptional cold water fisheries. As the longest undammed river in the eastern U.S., the Delaware River provides unparalleled access to the full range of habitats for nearly all migratory (diadromous) fish species of the Atlantic Coast. These rivers also offer numerous recreational opportunities, such as fishing, canoeing, rafting, and eagle watching, which attract many visitors and boost the regional economy. This area also contains a unique geographical feature, Point Mountain, one of the only free-standing mountains in the world, which lies at the confluence of the East and West branches. These rivers and their watersheds are also critical biological resources, from both aquatic and terrestrial standpoints, with many rare, unique, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species living in this area.

The Delaware River Basin supplies over 15-million people (approximately 5% of the nation's population) with water for drinking and agricultural and industrial uses. These users include residents in New York City, Trenton, NJ and Philadelphia, PA. Three reservoirs on Delaware River tributaries make up part of the New York City Water Supply System, which is the nation's largest unfiltered municipal water supply. Protection of these watersheds is critical for the continuation of a clean drinking water supply for millions of people. Currently only a tiny percentage of land along

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the Delaware River Branches and Main Stem corridor is permanently protected. Since the 2009 plan, NYCDEP has acquired 20,808 acres in the Delaware River drainage basin.

- **Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB)/Route 97:** A 70-mile linear corridor running along State Route 97 in Orange, Sullivan and Delaware counties that encompasses the Upper Delaware River and its river communities, the Byway connects communities, scenic, recreational, natural, cultural and historical resources throughout the valley. It also encompasses the National Park Service's Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Portions of the Byway are also designated as Bike Route 17, which intersects with Bicycle Route "Y" at the Roebling Bridge connecting to Pennsylvania.

The UDSB Enhancement Concept was developed through the collaboration of various partnering agencies, as well as the River Management Plan from NPS. It is also the area of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, which has identified many opportunities to improve river accesses for the public as well as amenities for the travelling public, be they on the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway or the river itself. This includes building a visitor center for the Byway at the Fort Delaware campus in Narrowsburg, fixing problems associated with the Callicoon Overflow Channel, redesigning and improving accesses such as Kellam's Bridge, Long Eddy, and Skinners Falls, creating access where needed, such as in Pond Eddy, and improving wayfinding signage to facilitate navigation to the resources and to convey the message that a visitor has arrived in an area of national significance and resources.

- A. Sites of Historic Significance – Fort Delaware, Minisink Battleground, and Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct and Delaware & Hudson Canal would all benefit from protections and increased funding for creating trails and programming. Linkages to other priority areas include the Basha Kill Wetlands and the Shawangunks, where the D&H Canal continues.
 - B. Publicly Owned Lands – Hickok Brook Multiple Use Area, Lake Superior State Park and Crystal Lake Forest Preserve are under-programmed and would greatly benefit from having programming, including improvement and expansion that reflect the needs of area residents and visitors. Additionally, a partnership among residents, municipalities and the state would help maximize the benefits of these lands and illustrate their value.
- **Neversink River Corridor:** The Neversink River is a 55-mile-long tributary of the Delaware River, where the main flow begins slightly south of the border between Ulster and Sullivan counties. The Neversink Corridor region begins after the river leaves the Neversink Reservoir in Sullivan County and continues until the river reaches the Delaware River in Orange County. It flows generally southeast through the mountains and the Towns of Fallsburg, Thompson and Forestburgh in Sullivan County and the City of Port Jervis and the Town of Deerpark in Orange County. This corridor then links to the Neversink Gorge Vicinity (detailed in the Neversink Highlands Priority Area) and ends at the Delaware River (detailed in the River Corridor and Delaware Highlands priority areas). Many opportunities exist along the river to increase public access, provide scenic vistas, and develop trails (detailed in the Trail System Priority Area).
 - **Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area:** The Mongaup River drainage, a tributary to the main stem of the Delaware River in Sullivan and Orange counties, is a critical nesting and wintering area for bald eagles and also provides numerous public hunting and fishing opportunities. Audubon

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recognizes this valley as an Important Bird Area. Opportunities for expansion exist in several areas adjacent to the current Wildlife Management Area, especially the large privately owned reservoir lands to the north and undeveloped parcels in the south. Consideration should be given to preserving habitat, water quality and the viewshed on large, contiguous, vacant parcels held by private hunt clubs through conservation easement acquisitions. Potential linkages exist to Lake Superior State Park and other recreational areas, including the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway and the original Woodstock concert site, now known as Bethel Woods Performing Arts Center.

- **Route 28 Corridor:** New York State Route 28 is the primary road corridor through the central Catskill high peaks region, connecting population centers and major interstates in metropolitan Kingston and Oneonta. Because of this existing transportation infrastructure, it is well suited for sustainable small-scale economic development to draw visitors, support local businesses and preserve the natural environment. This area provides an opportunity to simultaneously protect land and promote growth in the Catskills using outdoor recreation-based tourism that focuses on land preservation and controlled recreational use of public natural areas. Environmentally sound economic development initiatives here are very sustainable. It is a potential State Scenic Byway and includes eastern and western gateways to the Catskill Park. Priority areas along this route are known as Gateway Properties, lands adjacent to, and visible from, the easternmost five or six miles of Rt. 28 and include, but are not limited to:
 - A. **Blue Stone Wild Forest:** Just west of Kingston in Ulster County, covering and connecting four towns, this area is actively used by mountain bikers, hikers and birders but holds great potential for expansion and further development of its trail system as a mountain biking destination. The topography, terrain and precipitation pattern in this part of the Catskills are conducive to more intensive recreational uses with minimal damage to natural resources. Within the boundaries of Bluestone Wild Forest are areas of significant historical and cultural significance, including the bluestone quarry industry. Significant portions of several historic roads and trails connecting area towns—Jockey Hill Rd., Evergreen Road and the Waughkonk Trail—lie within Blue Stone Wild Forest. State lands within the core area between Route 28 and Sawkill Road should be consolidated, and those parcels along Route 28 should be acquired to provide trailhead access points, protect historic trails and roads where possible, and preserve this impressive scenic viewshed. It is recommended that the Blue Stone Wild Forest boundaries be extended to incorporate numerous, now isolated DEC tracts increasingly used for recreation. Two lie south of Route 28 in the Towns of West Hurley and Ulster, seven lie north of Sawkill Rd. in the Towns of Woodstock and Kingston. Protecting, connecting and potentially expanding some of these tracts as part of the overall protection plan for Blue Stone Wild Forest will facilitate their consolidation into larger, coherent open space resources within and between communities facing ever increasing development pressures.
 - B. **Ticeteneyck Mt./Tonshi Mt./Kenozia Lake:** The first highly visible, mountainous, open space area along Rt. 28 in Ulster County; several large private land holdings have been protected through fee acquisition (DEC) or by conservation easements acquired by New York City, but a number still remain unprotected.

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- C. **Catskill Interpretive Center Area:** Opportunity to connect the proposed Ulster County Interpretive Center site with existing Forest Preserve lands situated on Mt. Tobias. Acquisition of key parcels along Rt. 28 and Wittenberg Rd. will protect the views of mountains, forests, and meadows from the proposed visitor center.
- D. **Meade Hill/Fleischmann Mountain** – A large, highly visible, completely unprotected mountain ridge immediately adjacent to Rt. 28 in the Town of Middletown; critical to the continuity of mountain habitat and vistas between Dry Brook Ridge and the Belleayre Mountain Ski Area.
- **E. Catskill Mountain Heritage Trail** – Includes significant historic sites and scenic views from the John Burroughs Homestead, Burroughs Memorial site, and Woodchuck Lodge near Roxbury on Route 30, continuing easterly along the Route 23 and 23A corridors, and extending to the Thomas Cole House in the Village of Catskill. Very few acres of the original Burroughs Homestead are permanently protected, and there is a critical need to protect the pastoral setting surrounding Woodchuck Lodge and the Burroughs Memorial site.

CATSKILLS UNFRAGMENTED FOREST {40.} ♦^ – The region encompassing the Catskill Mountains is identified in the Open Space Plan as a Major Resource Area in Regions 3 and 4. The Catskill Park, which is a mosaic of State Forest Preserve lands and private property, comprises a large, central part of this region. Large, unfragmented areas of forest land in the Catskill high peaks area are excellent candidates for addition to the Forest Preserve. Audubon recognizes this area as an Important Bird Area. Priority should be given to protecting individually large parcels that: border, connect, or provide better access to existing State land; connect valley bottoms to mountainsides and peaks or ridges; are of scenic, cultural, or recreational importance; and/or contain particularly diverse, unique, or threatened natural species or communities.

Region 3 Conservation Efforts should focus on the following sites:

- **Overlook Mountain, Mount Guardian:** Priority should be given to properties identified in the Overlook Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan. Land acquisition is important for creating a usable and viable wild forest in an area that has long influenced painters, writers and musicians, and played a prominent role in creating America's perspective on nature and wilderness. Significant areas include the slopes and high elevations of Mt. Guardian. Headwater streams that flow off the northern and southern slopes of this highly visible mountain feed the Sawkill Creek, which is the drinking water supply for the City of Kingston. The ridgeline extending from Overlook Mountain Wild Forest to Meads Mountain and Mount Guardian provides a dramatic backdrop to the Village of Woodstock and viewsheds from there and beyond.

The Town of Woodstock owns an extensive forested tract of land extending along the southern face of Meads Mountain westward to include the upper slopes of Mt. Guardian up to the ridgeline. The northern and western slopes of Mt. Guardian are still largely forested, including at least one unbroken large, privately owned tract covering much of the western face extending to the ridgeline. There is increasing use of the hiking trails leading from the historic Byrdcliffe Art Colony to the ridgeline across town lands. Woodstock Land Conservancy's (WLC) protection of Mt. Guardian began in 2000 with the outright gift of two ridgeline parcels totaling 18 acres. The WLC expanded

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the area of protected forestland on Mt. Guardian by purchasing 19 acres in 2003 and nearly 12 acres in 2005, helping to protect dramatic viewsheds from the west, including Cooper Lake.

- **Indian Head Wilderness Consolidation:** Improved access and additional protection can preserve wilderness attributes, enhance recreation value, and protect scenic vistas. Improved public access is especially important due to rugged terrain and lack of road frontage; increased development pressure is also a concern in this area. Examples of opportunities to improve access and protect scenic vistas include the acquisition of Little Rocky and Olderbark mountains.
- **Balsam, Graham and Doubletop Mountains/Dry Brook Valley:** Several large tracts, including the summits of the last three Catskill peaks over 3,500' in elevation still in private ownership lie adjacent to the Big Indian Wilderness. These lands provide habitat for a distinctive assemblage of bird species, especially those that prefer subalpine coniferous forests, as well as at least one known federally threatened plant species. They play a critical role in the wilderness character of the area. Lying within New York City's watershed, they contribute clean drinking water to both the Catskill and Delaware systems. Dry Brook is also an excellent trout stream.
- **Peekamoose Gorge:** An approximately 3,300-acre tract of land in Ulster County surrounded on all sides by Forest Preserve; very rugged and remote with numerous seasonal waterfalls. Rondout Creek drains this property and is a significant trout stream and an important contributor to the New York City drinking water supply. The property harbors at least one known federally listed endangered species.
- **Upper Neversink Valley (East & West Branches):** Large forested tracts in the east and west valleys protect the source waters of the Neversink River and merge the two highest quality forest blocks in the High Allegheny Plateau. Protection of these tracts will prevent impacts to the Neversink River, reduce the potential for forest fragmentation, and improve access among the Big Indian Wilderness, the Slide Mountain Wilderness and the Sundown Wild Forest.
- **Fir Brook/Round Pond/Black Bear Road Vicinity:** This area includes tracts of land in the Willowemoc headwater areas along Flugertown Rd.; in the vicinity of Fir Brook and Blue Hill along Pole Rd., as well as hunting club lands along Black Bear Rd. and in the vicinity of Round Pond in Ulster County. The Willowemoc Creek is a renowned Catskill trout fishing stream and is listed separately in the Open Space Plan as a Priority Area. The Fir Brook wetland is a unique, scenic, remote, and wild area of the Catskills, and the Willowemoc Wild Forest is an important resource for hunting, snowmobiling, and other forms of outdoor recreation in the Catskills.
- **West Shokan/Sampsonville Area Lands:** Opportunities to expand Forest Preserve holdings on the eastern side of the Slide Mountain Wilderness in Ulster County should be explored, including areas around Maltby Hollow, and Hanover, South, High Point, and Mombaccus mountains.

Region 4 Conservation Efforts should focus on the following sites:

- **Catskill Escarpment, Windham High Peak, and Kaaterskill Wild Forest** – Includes the dramatic landscape between the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill peaks; principal concerns are protection of significant scenic vistas and ecologically unique areas; enhancement of recreational opportunities, interpretive trails, overlooks, and improved public access; and consolidation of state holdings.

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- Hunter–West Kill Wilderness/Indian Head Wilderness/Rusk Mountain Wild Forest – These very popular recreation areas lack sufficient access, especially in the Spruceton Valley and Upper Schoharie Valley. Consolidation and additional protection are essential to preserve wilderness attributes and protect scenic vistas. Additional protection and access is also needed in the western portion of the Wild Forest.

HUDSON RIVER CORRIDOR ESTUARY/HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY AND GREENWAY TRAIL/HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL ART TRAIL {41.} ♦ ^– Since the most recent Open Space Plan’s release in 2009, significant progress has been made conserving land in this priority project area. NYSOPRHP has acquired key inholdings to Bear Mountain State Park. NYSDEC has established Black Creek State Forest in Ulster County, a new conservation area at Vosburgh Swamp in Greene County, and a 296–acre addition to the Stockport Flats unit of the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (Little Nutten Hook) in Columbia County. The region’s land trusts and conservation organizations have worked with interested landowners to conserve ecologically significant and highly scenic land along the Black Creek corridor, at Shaupeneak Ridge, Esopus Meadows Point, and in Glasco in Ulster County, and New Baltimore in Greene County, all of which increase public access to the Hudson River, tributaries and ridgelines. Efforts to conserve historic views from the Olana State Historic Site have been redoubled via partnerships among organizations. The former Fort Montgomery Marina has been secured for public use by Scenic Hudson and the Town of Highlands, and new riverfront parkland has been secured in Milton (Ulster County), Tivoli (Dutchess County), and Bethlehem (Albany County). Wetlands, streams and uplands in the watershed of the City of Hudson’s South Bay have been conserved. Productive farmland has been conserved in agricultural areas of Dutchess, Ulster, Orange, Sullivan, Columbia, Rensselaer, and Washington counties.

The Corridor includes a number of significant projects in Regions 3 and 4 to create new links in the Greenway Trail, as described in the Greenway Act of 1991, Quadricentennial Legacy Trail (existing and new trails as designated during the 2009 Quadricentennial Celebration), and to provide public recreational opportunities with physical or visual access to the Hudson River. The project includes significant opportunities to promote habitat conservation, watershed and tributary protection, and to safeguard critical public infrastructure and adaptation needed in response to climate change, as described in the Hudson River Action Plan. The project includes, but is not limited to, the following representative sites, grouped in the following categories:

- **State Land Transfers** – State lands with natural resource and river access values which would be transferred to DEC, OPRHP or local entities for management; these could include but not be limited to: lands along Black Creek in the Town of Lloyd, the Ossining shoreline trail, Bronck Island, and the Bethlehem/Coeymans waterfront lands.
- **Hudson River Access** – Sites which provide recreational or visual access to the Hudson River, including but not limited to: Petersen’s Boatyard (Upper Nyack), Highland Falls Marina, Sleepy Hollow Waterfront, and Castle Oil in Tarrytown/Sleepy Hollow, Fort Montgomery Marina, Island Dock (Kingston), Hudson River Islands, Gorman and White Beach (Verplanck), Brockway Brickyard, Beacon Long Dock, Town of Newburgh (Anchorage), Poughkeepsie Pirate Canoe Club addition and Sand Dock Road, Lent’s Cove Addition (Buchanan), and Hudson South Bay access.

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- **Hudson River Greenway Trail Links** – Properties along both sides of the Hudson River that would establish a continuous trail from New York City through Saratoga and Washington counties, with direct or, at a minimum, visual access to the Hudson River, trail corridors that connect cities, villages, railroad stations, and existing and potential regional trails with neighboring parks, preserve, historic sites and other natural and cultural amenities, and regional trails that link to riverside trails, including but not limited to: a “Black Creek/Burroughs” land and water trail corridor along the Black Creek that knits together the Burroughs Sanctuary, Scenic Hudson’s Black Creek Preserve, Black Creek State Forest and Chodikee Lake; a Hudson River School Art Trail that maps, preserves and promotes the painting sites of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford and Jasper Cropsey; and locally or county approved greenway trail/access plans, such as but not limited to the Westchester County RiverWalk, the Walkway Over the Hudson, the Dutchess County Greenway Trail, the Hudson Fjord Trail in Putnam and Dutchess counties, and the Walkway Loop Trail in the City of Poughkeepsie and Town of Lloyd.
- **Hudson River Greenway Water Trail Sites** – Sites along both sides of the Hudson River that would contribute to the Hudson River Valley Greenway’s Water Trail, one of nine National Water Trails. These sites provide opportunities for day and overnight use by canoes and kayaks along the shoreline of the Hudson River.
- **Hudson Tributaries** – Sites which protect habitat and provide access to stream banks of tributaries, especially in proximity to their estuarine waters, including but not limited to: Croton Gorge, Rondout Creek, Quassaick Creek, Idlewild Creek (Cornwall), Fishkill Creek, Fallkill Creek, Sawmill (Neperhan) Creek (Yonkers), Wappinger Creek, Little Wappinger Creek, Casperkill Creek, Pocantico River, Annsville Creek, Black Creek, Esopus Creek, Binnenkill Creek, Coxsackie Creek, Stockport Creek, Saw Kill, Roeliff Jansen Kill, MacGregory’s Brook (Peekskill), Moodna Creek, Landsmankill, Stony Creek, and tributaries feeding Hudson South Bay.
- **Scenic Viewsheds** – Sites which provide scenic vistas, including but not limited to: Snake Hill, Illinois Mountain, Stissing Mountain/Thompson Pond, Scofield Ridge, Fishkill Ridge, Mt. Beacon, Highland Falls Ridgeline, and viewsheds visible from publicly accessible places, points including but not limited to the Mid-Hudson Bridge/Blue Point Bluffs/Hudson Valley Winery, Camp Smith, Olana State Historic Site, Peebles Island State Park, Walkway Over the Hudson, Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, and Lands Within Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance.
- **Buffer, Access or Addition to Historic Sites, Conservation and Park Lands** – Properties which protect the integrity of existing conservation lands or historic sites, including but not limited to: Ft. Montgomery State Historic Site, Hudson North Bay, Stuyvesant Riverfront, Poughkeepsie Waterfront Trail, Schodack Island State Park, areas adjacent to Roosevelt/Vanderbilt National Historic sites, Hudson River National Historic District (Rhinebeck/Redhook area), Bear Mountain State Park, Harriman State Park, Hudson Highlands State Park, Peebles Island State Park, Clermont State Historic Site Buffer, Little Stony Point, Lyndhurst North Buffer, Tivoli Bays Buffer and inholding, Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center, Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery Lands, John Burroughs Sanctuary Buffer and Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve Sites.

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- **Historic Sites Related to the American Revolution** – The Hudson Valley played a pivotal role in the winning of American freedom. The protection and enhancement of sites such as the New Windsor Cantonment, Fort Montgomery, Washington’s Headquarters at Newburgh, Stony Point Battlefield, Fort Hill At Peekskill, Fishkill Supply Depot in Fishkill, Bennington Battlefield at Hoosick Falls, Camp Ramapough in Suffern, and Minisink Battleground and Fort Delaware in Sullivan County, can be accomplished through the protection of land adjacent to and contiguous with these historic sites.
- **Fish and Wildlife Management** – The sites identified here conserve the habitats of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in three categories of priority habitats identified by NYSDEC: a) shoreline corridors that provide essential habitat for river otter, wood turtle, cerulean warbler, wading birds, trout, stream salamanders and Hudson River nymph; b) unbroken forests needed by scarlet tanager, wood thrush, warblers, wide-ranging mammals, hawks, owls, box turtles, and fringed polygala flower; and c) unique natural areas that support at-risk plants and animals, such as smooth cliff brake fern, grass pink orchid, bog turtle, peregrine falcon, and bald eagle. In addition, these sites provide estuarine and upland habitat, significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats as identified by the Department of State, lands adjacent to these habitats that will allow these habitats to migrate upslope as sea level rises, or significant wildlife corridors that will allow species to move to higher ground as temperatures rise due to climate change, including but not limited to: Constitution Marsh, Papscanee Island and Marsh, Shaupeneak Ridge, Scofield Ridge, Mouth of Annsville Creek, Hudson South Bay, Four Mile Point/Vosburgh Swamp/West Flats, State Estuarine Sanctuary Additions, Ramshorn Marsh, Minisceongo/Grassy Point Marshes, Eddyville Dam, Esopus Lakes, Bronck Island, Mouth of Binnen Kill and all estuarine and terrestrial “Biologically Important Areas” as designated by the Hudson River Estuary Program.
- **Urban Waterfronts** – Sites facilitating implementation of local waterfront revitalization plans that incorporate public access to the waterfront, including but not limited to: Poughkeepsie Waterfront, Beacon Waterfront, Newburgh Waterfront, Hastings Waterfront, Tarrytown Waterfront, Sleepy Hollow Waterfront, Dobbs Ferry Waterfront, Croton Waterfront, Ossining Waterfront, Peekskill Southern Waterfront and “Peekskill Landing,” Hudson Waterfront, Kingston/Ulster Waterfront, Yonkers and Highlands Waterfront.
- **Lands Important to Regional Adaptation to Sea-Level Rise** – This includes lands that are: vulnerable to inundation; help attenuate flooding and storm surges; buffer critical infrastructure; or facilitate the upland migration of tidal water bodies, intertidal and supratidal wetlands, and adjacent riparian buffers.
- **Green Edges to City and Village Centers** – Lands next to cities and villages which encompass important scenic, ecological, agricultural or cultural resources; present public recreation opportunities; prevent sprawling development patterns by providing open space edges to such densely settled areas; and have not been zoned to extend the city or village as part of a smart growth plan, nor credibly identified as appropriate locations for necessary public infrastructure.
- **Important Farmland**

NEW YORK CITY WATERSHED LANDS {42.} ♦^ – New York City expects to continue acquisition efforts under the 1997 Watershed Agreement (signed by local communities, counties, and the State) and the

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2007 Water Supply Permit issued by DEC, and in accordance with a comprehensive water quality-based watershed protection plan. It is recommended that the State work with the City to identify and protect high-priority sites within the Region that are not being pursued by or protected under City acquisition programs. In particular, the State should focus acquisition efforts on lands that (1) have potential for development, forestry, or fisheries and are (2) relatively large and/or (3) link areas already protected by private or public entities and/or (4) allow for improved long-term management of land and water resources. All such work by the State should naturally conform to established criteria for protection under the State Open Space Conservation Plan. Roughly 70% of NYC's east-of-Hudson reservoir basin area overlaps with, and has been identified by the USDA Forest Service as part of, a Highlands Conservation Focal Area.

TACONIC RIDGE/HARLEM VALLEY {43.} ♦ – An area comprising the Taconic Mountain Ridge and its viewsheds, where it straddles the New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont borders in Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia and Rensselaer counties, and the Harlem Valley. At its southern end, it is anchored by the Cranberry Mountain State Wildlife Management Area in Putnam County and extends to the north through Quaker Hill in Pawling and eastern Dutchess County along the Connecticut border, west to include the Harlem Valley and lands to the west, including West Mountain, and north to the Taconic State Park. From here it extends northerly through Columbia and Rensselaer counties, westerly to include the Route 22 Corridor and its viewsheds, and northward along the borders of Massachusetts and Vermont. The viewshed includes the Taconic Ridge, Harlem Valley, Route 22 corridor, farmlands of central Dutchess County, and Stissing Mountain.

Protection of this area continues to be a high priority due to the region's high biodiversity, presence of threatened and endangered species, scenic views, substantial recreational value, thousands of acres of intact/unfragmented forestland, steeply sloping hillsides, unique geologic segments, historic architecture, working farm landscapes, and multiple connection opportunities to land currently protected by the State, federal government, counties, towns and private land conservation organizations. The Taconic Ridge is a Forest Legacy Area and qualified to apply for land acquisition grants through the federal Forest Legacy Program. In 2013, DEC received a federal Forest Legacy Program grant for the purchase of a 1,300-acre conservation easement on Mount Lebanon, which contains some of the most spectacularly scenic, ecologically important and culturally significant resources found in the area. The easement will provide opportunities for public recreation, environmental education and archeological research.

Numerous trail systems, including the Appalachian Trail, Taconic Crest Trail and South Taconic Trail extending beyond the New York border, and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, continue to be important projects for this area and will increase recreational opportunities for the public and provide permanent public use and access of the Taconic Ridge area. In addition, acquisition of properties in the Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley and Route 22 corridor will protect important open space, scenic viewsheds, working farm landscapes, and watersheds and water quality, and preserve critical wildlife habitat for several threatened and endangered species.

Specific projects include the Shaker Swamp, an almost 500-acre wetland complex supporting high biodiversity and serving as an important aquifer recharge area; surrounding active farmland,

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formerly owned by the Shakers and regarded as historically significant; Schein Parcel, a connector between Cranberry Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area and Ciaiola County Park; Ice Pond and its wetland system and surrounding forested areas that support a high diversity of critical habitat species and peat wetlands; Nuclear Lake–West Mountain connectors; Depot Hill and Taconic State Park additions; various intact camp properties; Wassaic Multiple Use Area buffers, including Taconic DDS/Wassaic State School; Appalachian Trail, Taconic Crest Trail, South Taconic Trail and Harlem Valley Rail Trail connectors and viewshed protection, including the Appalachian Trail viewshed as seen from the Cat Rocks overlook and the Telephone Pioneers Shelter Overnight Use Area in the vicinity of the Dover Oak (the largest blazed tree on the Appalachian Trail) near West Dover Road in Pawling and Dover; Little Whaley Lake; the Crane Pond and Depression Pond area on East Mountain; Route 22 corridor viewshed protection; prime farmland soils and designated wetlands along Route 22 and the Webatuck Creek and Ten Mile River; unique geologic segments of the Taconic Ridge, such as East Mountain, Rattlesnake Mountain, Stissing Mountain/Thompson Pond, West Mountain, Seven Wells, and Nellie Hill and Stone Church buffers; and exceptional plant and wildlife habitat areas ranked on the State Natural Heritage Inventory, such as rattlesnake and bog turtle habitat, limestone wet meadows, graminoid fens and sedge meadows.

Since this area’s inclusion in the initial State Open Space Conservation Plan, thousands of acres have been protected in Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia and Rensselaer counties. Nonetheless, because key portions of the area demonstrating high biodiversity, scenic views, recreational value, working forests and farmland, and potential connections to other protected lands remain unprotected, the Taconic Ridge/Harlem Valley and associated viewsheds continue to be high priorities for protection. In addition, extensions of the Taconic Crest Trail and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, as well as protection of the Route 22 corridor, which includes scenic vistas, highly productive farmland, and wetland habitat supporting endangered and threatened species, continue to be important considerations within the overall area.

TURTLE CONSERVATION SITES {44.} ♦ – These wetlands and associated uplands provide habitats for a high diversity of turtles, including some of New York’s most imperiled species. The wetlands are scattered across Columbia, Dutchess, Putnam, Ulster, and Orange counties. Some important concentrations include the Fishkill Creek, Wallkill River, Sprout Creek, Housatonic River, Great Swamp and Wappinger Creek drainage basins. This area supports the highest diversity of turtles in New York State and provides habitat for five species of state-listed endangered, threatened and special concern species, including the bog turtle (state endangered, federally threatened) and Blanding’s turtle (state threatened). These sites include rare and significant ecological communities, such as calcareous fens, dwarf shrub bogs, shrub swamps and floodplain forest. This project includes additions to James Baird State Park and the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, as well as the creation of new preserves, and encompasses the Dutchess Meadows project.

DELAWARE RIVER HIGHLANDS {45.} ♦ – Few large globally significant forest ecosystems remain intact today in the continental United States. One of these key remaining ecological regions, the High Allegheny Plateau, covers land areas in both New York and Pennsylvania. Those portions in Sullivan and

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Delaware counties are known as the Delaware River Highlands, where the geology, soils, climate, elevation and landform configuration define the ecological potential of this system for providing significant water quality preservation and unmatched wildlife habitat. With such proximity to major Metropolitan areas like New York City, Trenton and Philadelphia, this eco-region is a critical hub for other collections of nearby smaller forests, river corridors and ridge tops to provide contiguous natural resource protection. As such, the Upper Delaware Highlands is a critical area to protect because it remains one of the last large globally important forest ecosystems within the High Allegheny Plateau that can provide connective wildlife corridors, produce important food crops, preserve water quality and quantity and retain a quickly diminishing unique wild landscape.

As noted under the Catskill River and Road Corridor section, this region encompasses New York's largest portion of the National Park System and includes the Upper Delaware River Scenic and Recreational River. This designation should be better leveraged to enhance tourism and preservation efforts. While legally allowed to own 1,000 acres in the corridor, the NPS has agreed to own only 124 acres as per the River Management Plan, and currently owns approximately 30 acres. Efforts should be made through other ownership opportunities and easements to continue preservation efforts in this area. The NPS should be supported and promoted to ensure funding of this vital resource continues. Working with regional groups, the Delaware River should also be promoted to become a National Water Trail.

This area has been engaging in a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program planning process, which has identified many opportunities described below. Conservation efforts should focus on preserving, through both easement and fee acquisition, large stretches of contiguous undeveloped or minimally developed lands. Additionally, maintaining and improving programming for existing areas is important for fostering use and stewardship of the region's natural environment. Priority areas in this section include:

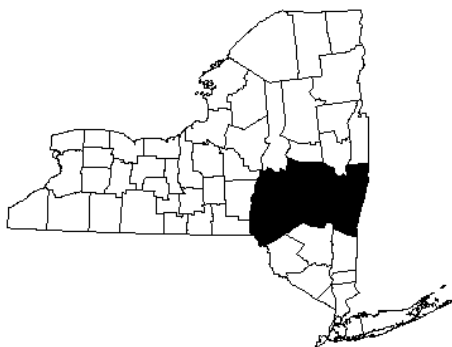
- **Forest Lands** – NY State's Upper Delaware Highlands are home to dozens of hunt clubs who own, en masse, more than 30,000 acres. Privately managed and most in existence for more than a century, many of these hunting organizations have practiced sound stewardship standards primarily focused on approved forestry plans pursuant to NY's Forest Tax Law 480A program. Add to that over 10,000 acres owned by the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of America, and it is clear that the amount of forest that is not in public ownership or protected by conservation easements is a significant portion of the total area. These organizations are faced with pressures that include shrinking wildlife habitat in surrounding Catskill communities, expanding pressures of residential and commercial development, and risks to water quality and quantity, and enticing offers for natural gas exploration. These landowners may prefer to preserve their forest lands in their natural state through the sale of conservation easements to prevent further development, subdivision and incompatible use. Conservation efforts by the State and land trusts should focus on protecting this unique contiguous swath of wild lands that will preserve critical wildlife habitat, preserve the underlying watershed, support outdoor related economies and maintain rural community character.
- **Sites of Historic Significance** – Fort Delaware, Minisink Battleground, Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct and Delaware & Hudson Canal, and the Woodstock concert site would all benefit from protections and increased funding for creating trails and programming. Linkages to other priority areas include

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the Catskill River and Road Corridors, the Basha Kill Wetland System and the Shawangunk Mountain Region, where the D&H Canal continues into Ulster County.

- **Publicly Owned Lands** – Hickok Brook Multiple Use Area, Lake Superior State Park and Crystal Lake Forest Preserve, among others, are under-programmed and would greatly benefit from having programming, including improvement and expansion that reflects the needs of area residents and visitors. Additionally, these lands are ripe for a partnership among the residents, municipalities and the state to help maximize their benefits to area residents and visitors and downriver communities, helping both the State and area communities realize the value of the lands.

REGION 4/CAPITAL REGION



Many of the geographic features in the Lower Hudson River Valley continue north into the Capital Region. The Hudson River is tidal up to the Troy Dam, while in reaches above the dam its freshwater flows are beyond the tides' influence. The Capital Region and the Lower Hudson Valley (Region 3) are rich in wildlife habitat, with 22 significant habitat types that support species of greatest conservation need (SCGN ♦).*

The Hudson River Valley is broad and much flatter in the Capital Region, a legacy of the sands and clays left by an enormous glacial lake. The limestone Helderberg escarpment is a prominent landscape feature on the west side of the river. The Albany Pine Bush is one of the world's few inland pine barrens. The Taconic Range along the eastern border of the State has a complex geologic history, which provided some of the evidence for modern plate tectonic theory. The Northern Catskill Mountains are perhaps most famous for their role in art. Kaaterskill Clove, a steep gorge cut into the massive wall of the Catskill Mountain front, was one of the key inspirations for the artists of the Hudson River School. The Catskill Forest Preserve, established in 1904, has helped protect much of the scenic beauty of the Catskill Mountains.

History is everywhere in the Hudson Valley, one of the first areas colonized by the Dutch, following Henry Hudson's 1609 discovery of the Hudson River. Development of the present Capital District area was driven by the strategic location where the navigable Hudson River ended and the Mohawk River began its course to the west. After dams, canals and locks were built, Albany was a hub for Erie Canal/Mohawk River traffic from the west and Champlain Canal traffic from the north.

* 2006 NYSDEC Conservation Framework

To read the Region 4 Advisory Committee's full report, see: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html.

ALBANY PINE BUSH {46.} ♦ – This area of Albany County and a small portion of eastern Schenectady County support a rare and endangered inland pine barrens ecosystem. Protection guidelines for much of this area are established by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission in their 2010 management plan, with the overall objective of establishing an ecologically viable and manageable preserve. The plan included an expanded study area up to the Schenectady County border in response to public feedback. While tremendous success has been achieved with the protection of over 3,200 acres to date,

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the commission currently estimates that an additional 2,180 acres must be secured to create a viable preserve of 5,380 acres. The Region 4 Advisory Committee supports the work of the commission toward meeting its goals, and encourages conservation efforts directed at areas of existing and restorable Pine Bush habitat not included within the area designated.

COXSACKIE FLATS GRASSLAND AREA {47.} ♦ – This approximately 6,000-acre area, located in the eastern Greene County communities of New Baltimore, Coxsackie, and Athens, represents an important habitat for a suite of breeding and wintering grassland-dependent birds. Grassland habitat, such as that occupying the Coxsackie Flats area, has been disappearing at a high rate due to succession, changing agricultural practices, and development, resulting in a significant decline in most grassland breeding species, including but not limited to upland sandpiper, eastern meadowlark, bobolink, Henslow’s sparrow, and grasshopper sparrow. Similarly, the flats area provides important habitat for wintering raptors, particularly the state-endangered short-eared owl and state threatened northern harrier. Over 300 acres of the Coxsackie Flats area has been protected through a partnership between the Greene Land Trust and the Greene County IDA; however, the majority of the flats continue to be vulnerable, and increased protection is necessary to secure this significant grassland habitat and very popular recreational birding area.

DROWNED LANDS SWAMP WATERSHED {48.} ♦ – This significant area of Columbia County, which constitutes one of the largest wetland complexes in southeastern New York, is surrounded by high-quality farmland and striking scenic vistas. To date, 1,425 acres of wetlands and adjacent farmlands and forests have been protected through the concerted efforts of state agencies and private conservation organizations. Continuation of land acquisition and/or conservation easements remains a high priority for safeguarding the ecological diversity of the wetlands, as well as the agricultural viability and pastoral views of the surrounding countryside.

FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER {49.} – The Five Rivers Environmental Education Center is located between the rapidly growing suburban towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland in Albany County. The Center receives over 100,000 visitors annually and serves as an important wildlife preserve and popular birding area. Given that the entire area surrounding Five Rivers remains vulnerable to subdivision and development activity, opportunities for protection of public use, public access, and buffer areas remain a priority. One such opportunity includes the Phillipinkill stream corridor located north and east of the Five Rivers property, which presents potential for continued trail development already initiated by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy.

HAND HOLLOW CONSERVATION AREA {50.} ♦ – This Columbia County property, which is the Town of New Lebanon’s only public conservation area, now encompasses 434 acres, including a 21-acre lake, smaller ponds, perennial and seasonal streams, a great blue heron rookery, and more than 5 miles of public trails. There exists the potential to enhance this conservation area if a number of key parcels are acquired. These parcels would secure a portion of the lakefront and Hand Hollow watershed, as well as

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contribute to the overall habitat diversity by adding extensive areas of woodland and meadows, in addition to streams, upland ponds, and wetlands.

HELDERBERGS {51.} ♦^ –The Helderbergs protection area includes lands associated with the Helderberg Mountains, which extend diagonally from northeast Greene County, over much of western Albany County, to southwest Schenectady County. Much of this area is dominated by limestone formations, ranging from bedrock outcroppings and numerous small caves to the Helderberg Escarpment, the most prominent natural feature in Albany County and a site of geological and paleontological significance and outstanding scenic vistas. Also included in this area are forested slopes that transition into a variety of lowland habitats cut by streams draining into extensive and diverse wetlands, such as Vly Swamp and Black Creek Marsh State Wildlife Management Area. The overall landscape affords a high diversity of habitats that support a correspondingly high diversity of fauna and flora. This includes an amphibian diversity that rivals the entire New England region; two sites included on the National Audubon Society’s list of Important Bird Areas in New York State; and the 250–acre Joralemon Park, believed to have more fern species than any site of comparable size in New York State.

The Helderbergs area is also home to John Boyd Thacher State Park, which includes Thompson Lake Campground at John Boyd Thacher State Park, where there are numerous recreational opportunities; important state holdings, including Partridge Run Wildlife Management Area, Cole Hill State Forest, and Rensselaerville State Forest; the Bozen Kill corridor’s steep ravines, pristine stream course, and numerous waterfalls; and the highlands west of the escarpment, with impressive scenic views extending to the Catskills and expansive areas of farmland. In addition to each of the above individual features, connections between them are also regarded as priorities for protection.

MOHAWK RIVER VALLEY CORRIDOR/BARGE CANAL {52.} – Priority should be given to protecting significant scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources along the Mohawk River in addition to securing river and tributary access parcels that would enhance public enjoyment of these resources. Areas of particular concern in the Mohawk River corridor include “The Noses” in Montgomery County, two prominent landmarks of significant scenic and cultural value, and the Great Flats Aquifer in Schenectady County, designated by the EPA as one of just five Sole Source Aquifers in upstate New York. Protection efforts should also be directed toward securing buffer land adjacent to the newly created Mohawk River State Park in Schenectady County. Finally, it is also important to protect linkage parcels that contribute to the continuity of a statewide Canalway Trail system.

OOMSDALE FARM AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE {53.} ♦ – The focal point of this project area is Oomsdale Farm, which occupies approximately 400 acres in Chatham, Columbia County, and includes high–quality farmland, significant habitat for grassland nesting birds, and spectacular scenic vistas from the high open fields. Also included in this landscape complex are the Kinderhook Lake watershed, Kinderhook Creek corridor and associated floodplains, forestland, and open grassland fields. This area represents an outstanding opportunity to preserve a productive working landscape, while protecting a sizeable expanse of nesting habitat for increasingly uncommon grassland birds, as well as the significant contributing features of the surrounding landscape.

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REGION 4 RAIL TRAIL PROJECTS {54.} – The greatest risk following abandonment of a rail line is the possibility that the right-of-way will be subdivided and sold off piecemeal, all but precluding any future public use that would require an intact, continuous corridor. Ensuring the long-term integrity of abandoned rail lines by conversion to recreational rail trails is, therefore, of paramount importance in the context of priorities for protection. Such rail trail projects result in multi-purpose, public pathways through urban, suburban, and rural areas that are ideal for bicycling, walking, jogging, in-line skating, and cross-country skiing, and their flat or gentle grade is conducive to wheelchair use. These trails provide safe, off-road connections between population centers, as well as linkages between parks and preserves. As a result, rail trails enhance a community’s quality of life by promoting healthier lifestyles, providing environmentally friendly transportation alternatives, and stimulating local and regional economies.

There are currently seven rail trail projects in various stages of conceptual planning and development that are considered high priorities in Region 4:

- Harlem Valley Rail Trail through Columbia and Dutchess counties
- Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail in Albany County (with possible connection to the Historic Albany to Hudson Electric Trolley Trail)
- Historic Albany to Hudson Electric Trolley Trail through Rensselaer and Columbia counties (with possible connection to the Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail)
- Hoosic River Greenway Rail Trail in Rensselaer County
- Kaaterskill Rail Trail in Greene County
- Rutland Rail Trail through Rensselaer and Columbia counties (with possible connection to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail)
- Schoharie Gateway Rail Trail in Schoharie County

RENSELAER PLATEAU {55.} ♦^ – This area of Rensselaer County includes the fifth-largest unfragmented forest in the State and a portion of the Tomhannock Reservoir Watershed, which provides water to over 100,000 county residents. In addition to the expansive forest, the plateau supports several unique wetland communities (including sedge meadow, dwarf shrub bog, spruce-fir swamp, and kettle hole bog), an impressive mammal diversity not typical of the greater Capital District (including black bear, fisher, otter, bobcat, and moose), and is included on National Audubon Society’s list of Important Bird Areas in New York. The Rensselaer Plateau’s large forest blocks serve as core areas from which wildlife corridors to other forested areas extend and, according to the Natural Heritage Program, provide potential refuge for wildlife moving from southern areas or lower elevations in response to climate change. The Nature Conservancy has also identified the plateau as a significant “Resilient Site for Terrestrial Conservation.” Protection of this area would contribute to a long-term vision shared by a number of organizations to establish an open space corridor and trail system across the plateau connecting Dyken Pond Center, Grafton Lakes State Park, Pittstown State Forest, Capital District Wildlife Management Area, Dickinson Hill Fire Tower, and other recreation and environmental education facilities. The goal to protect this area and integral connecting corridors has brought together municipal officials, private landowners, representatives of the forest products industry, and various environmental groups. Their concerted efforts have led to the preparation of a comprehensive

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Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan and the initiation of a multi-year effort to acquire conservation easements on tens of thousands of acres of forestland on the plateau, using Forest Legacy and other funding programs.

SCHOHARIE VALLEY CORRIDOR {56.} ♦ – The Schoharie Valley Corridor is one of the oldest settled landscapes in the state and a setting of dramatic scenery and significant agricultural production. Some of the highest priority areas for protection are located from the Town of Esperance south to Gilboa, as well as along the Schoharie Creek and its tributaries throughout Montgomery and Schoharie counties. Of particular concern is conserving farmland throughout the valley; preserving Native American archaeological sites and the remains of pre-Revolutionary War forts; and protecting the narrow band of karst formations and associated water reserves that extend through the north portion of this area. Within this band are a number of larger cave systems that support hibernating bats; protection of these caves will directly contribute to the management of recreational caving and, therefore, help to control the spread of white-nose syndrome. Finally, protection of trail corridors and greenways in support of local trail initiatives, such as a current proposal extending from SUNY Cobleskill to Richmondville, will provide an important recreational complement to this area.

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER VALLEY CORRIDOR {57.} ♦^ – This major river valley corridor, which encompasses portions of Otsego and western Delaware counties, is an important component of the federal priority Chesapeake Bay drainage basin, the largest river basin on the Atlantic Seaboard. The Susquehanna River itself contributes the largest proportion of fresh water flowing into Chesapeake Bay, and the quality of this water, which supports a significant warm water fishery, is a direct function of open space protection in the corridor. Protection of parcels along the Susquehanna, including critical overlook sites, could provide needed public access to the river and its tributaries, thereby enhancing recreational opportunities while providing economic benefits to local communities. Specific sites of recreational importance include Brookwood Point, located on Otsego Lake, the Susquehanna's headwaters, and a key access point for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, as well as the Oaks Creek Blueway, beginning at Deowongo Island in Canadarago Lake and extending to Compton Bridge, just south of Otsego Lake. The majority (60 to almost 80 percent) of lands surrounding the Susquehanna's main tributaries are actively farmed, with a substantial proportion of the acreage containing prime agricultural soils. Also within this area is Franklin Mountain, which encompasses a ridgeline separating the Susquehanna and Delaware River watersheds in northern Delaware County. Franklin Mountain provides outstanding opportunities for viewing seasonal raptor migrations, as evidenced by the area's inclusion in National Audubon's list of Important Bird Areas in New York State.

WOLF HOLLOW/HOFFMAN'S FAULT {58.} – Hoffman's Fault provides a remarkable display of a north-south geological fault line that extends for several miles through western Schenectady County. Wolf Hollow, the best known portion of the fault, presents a dramatic example of the displacement of rock layers resulting from earthquake activity 100+ million years ago. The exposed rock strata on both sides of the fault line make Wolf Hollow a popular outdoor classroom for geology and earth science

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classes from around the Northeast. This area's unique contrasting bedrock and varying exposure to the sun on the east and west sides of the fault support a rich plant diversity with locally rare and uncommon ferns and mosses and a recently rediscovered moss once thought to be extirpated from the state. Historically, the hollow formed an important natural passage for Native American travels between the Mohawk River and the upper Hudson River. Wolf Hollow was also the site of a decisive Native American battle in 1669 that may have signaled the true "last of the Mohicans," following an important Mohawk victory over this Algonkian tribe. Numerous artifacts have been uncovered in archaeological digs conducted in the hollow indicating its importance to Native American culture. Today, the surrounding landscape retains much of its rural character, and while some land is protected under conservation easements held by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, much of this unique geological, ecological, and historic site remains vulnerable to encroachment by large lot development.

WOODLAWN PINE BARRENS–WETLANDS COMPLEX {59.} ♦ – This area of Schenectady County is situated immediately northwest of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and includes several remnant features of the Pine Bush, including sand plain and dune formations, pitch pine–scrub oak barrens, and historic Karner blue butterfly habitat which, while currently unoccupied, may be restored as a future reintroduction site. The area also supports several important wetlands forming a unique complex of pine barrens and wetland habitats. Although this area is outside the protection area designated by the Albany Pine Bush Commission, its attributes have been recognized as complementary to the Pine Bush Preserve and protection worthy. Owners of public lands in this area are encouraged to cooperate with state and other agencies to protect this habitat. Recent local efforts have included creation of the 135-acre Woodlawn Preserve by the City of Schenectady and 24 acres of parkland in the Town of Niskayuna.

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HOOSIC RIVER CORRIDOR {60.} ♦ – This inter-regional river corridor and its tributaries, located in Rensselaer and Washington counties, drain an extensive area encompassing lands in three states and form a significant portion of the upper Hudson River drainage north of the estuary. The corridor includes highly productive farmland and timberland, as well as important ecological, cultural, and scenic resources. Protection of this area will also enhance public recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, birding, and canoeing. In addition, a portion of the corridor overlies a major aquifer and includes several key recharge areas. This area has the potential for development of a major greenway across northern Rensselaer and southern Washington counties, linking the Rensselaer Plateau with the Green Mountains in Vermont and the Taconic Mountains along the Massachusetts–NY state line. Local initiatives toward such a greenway have already been started by the Town of Hoosick and the Village of Hoosick Falls. Furthermore, the Hoosic River is already a DEC–designated Public Fishing River, and DEC should continue efforts to obtain public fishing rights.