

Open Space News

Option To Protect 350 Acres Bordering Sterling Forest

After many years of negotiations with Arrow Park Resort, Inc., Orange County Land Trust is thrilled to announce that we have signed an option to purchase this 350-acre resort adjacent to Sterling Forest State Park. This Adirondack-like property includes a spectacular lake surrounded by forests near the Appalachian Trail, a stone lodge, and other facilities.

Under the purchase option agreement the Land Trust has three years to raise the funds to purchase the site. The Land Trust has established an Arrow Park Fund to receive donations and grants, and has already received initial pledges. "We will continue the successful formula that preserved over 18,000 acres in Sterling Forest: a partnership of public and private organizations working together to fund the purchase," said Land Trust Executive Director John Gebhards.

"Arrow Park will be a model of how preserved land can serve the community," said ABC/Disney Vice President Paul Dolan, lead negotiator for the Land Trust for this project. Arrow Park has been the site of extraordinary programs, including the planting of a memorial forest by the families of New York City firefighters killed in the 9/11 attack; science and teacher education programs in conjunction with Mount Sinai and the City University; and Calvary Hospital, a children's bereavement program.

"Arrow Park is an asset to the community," said Monroe Town Supervisor Sandy Leonard. "We are very pleased that the Orange County Land Trust and Arrow Park have reached this agreement and hope the fundraising efforts will be successful."



Arrow Mansion (above) and a view of Arrow Lake

Update: Orange County Open Space Plan

In its July session, the Orange County Legislature adopted the county's new Open Space Plan, which the Land Trust assisted the Orange County Planning Department in creating. (See Spring 2004 issue of "Open Space News.") The next step in the process is to allocate funding to support this important plan. The legislature will be reviewing the budget in its November 4 legislative session.

If you are concerned about protecting open space in Orange County, contact your legislator to request budgetary support for:

- ♦ Allocating \$1.5M from the multi-million dollar Water Authority fund to be used to protect land affecting our water quality;
- ♦ Appropriating \$2M for land protection in our county in 2005;
- ♦ Approving \$100K to support the Orange County Land Trust's acquisitions in 2005;
- ♦ Pledging \$20M for open space protection over the next 5 years as requested in the County Executive's budget.

To find the name of your legislator, go to www.co.orange.ny.us, click Departments, then click on Legislature and scroll down to the map. Or call the Land Trust office at 343-0840.

In Memoriam Ann Botshon

With a sense of great loss we mourn the passing of founding Board Member Ann Botshon. "Ann will be sorely missed. She has been for many years one of Orange County's most effective and courageous leaders for the environment," said Louis V. Mills, former Orange County Executive and founder of the Land Trust.

Ann and her husband, Richard, donated a conservation easement on their Pine Bush farm in order to ensure that it would never be developed. This year she was the recipient of the Louis V. Mills Award, presented by the Land Trust to recognize her outstanding contributions to land preservation in Orange County.

Ann was particularly concerned about protection of the Wallkill River. She helped form the Wallkill River Task Force, a project of the Orange County Land Trust, and served as its Coordinator from 1999 until last year.

Ann was a bright, warm, loving individual who cared deeply for her family, her dogs, her friends and her community.

Ann's family have requested that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in her memory to the Orange County Land Trust.



Highlights



The Land Trust is delighted to welcome new Board Member Jo Marvel Hull. Jo did a great job as a volunteer member of this year's Dinner Committee. As a lifetime resident, Jo brings an in-depth knowledge about Orange County history, as well as many artistic, culinary and organizational skills, to our board.



It was another sold out Land Trust gala this year as we gathered at Arden House to honor Sandra and Jan van Heerden and Ann Botshon (not pictured) for their dedication to land protection. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff was our speaker for this affair, which was generously underwritten by Jim Ottaway.



Year-end Celebration

Don't miss this party! All are welcome to join us to celebrate the year's accomplishments and talk over plans for the year to come. It's an informal open house gathering at the Land Trust office (First Presbyterian Church building, downtown Middletown) on December 10, from 3 to 6. Sample hors d'oeuvres provided by our Board Members and get to know your neighbors who are supporting open space protection in Orange County!

Shawangunk Ridge Land Preserved



View from Shawangunk Ridge

Five parcels of land atop the Shawangunk Ridge in the Towns of Mt. Hope and Deerpark have been protected from development as a result of collaboration between the Orange County Land Trust, and the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference with the generous support of Orange County. The Shawangunk Ridge, named one of the “Last Great Places” in a worldwide ranking by The Nature Conservancy, is a priority protection area for the Land Trust.

“The Shawangunk Ridge provides a wonderful scenic vista, and we’re working to protect it from clear-cutting and development. With the fall foliage season approaching, it’s good to know we’ll be seeing autumn leaves on this portion of the ridge forever,” said Land Trust Executive Director John Gebhards. In addition to its scenic and recreational value, this land provides important wildlife habitat, as it forms part of a ridge corridor used by bears, bobcats and other animals.

Orange County Land Trust botanist, Tom Alford, has discovered an unusually large stand of healthy American chestnut trees on the protected land. These beautiful trees were the hallmark of Eastern forests and villages a century ago, but almost all have been killed off by the chestnut blight. “This is the highest concentration of American chestnut trees I’ve seen in the area,” said Tom Alford. “What’s exciting is that many of the trees are 6 to 8 inches in diameter and bearing fruit.”

The wooded land will be part of the Shawangunk Ridge Trail. “We are very pleased to work with the Orange County Land Trust in our effort to create a protected trail corridor along the entire Shawangunk Ridge,” said Ed Goodell, Executive Director of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

This collaboration between the two organizations is expected to continue, as negotiations are underway to protect additional parcels on the Ridge.

Partnering for Orange County Open Space

As the cost of protecting Orange County open space continues to escalate, the close coordination of the various land protection organizations becomes ever more important. Twenty thousand acres of Sterling Forest were saved because our Land Trust joined with the Open Space Institute, the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, Scenic Hudson, the Palisades Park Board and others to bring it about. Right now, our Land Trust is joining with the New York/New Jersey Trail conference in fighting to save the Shawangunk Ridge. Some time back The Nature Conservancy asked us to take over Moonbeams, and joined with us in purchasing the Lower Bashakill Preserve. The protection of Arrow Park has become a high priority for us in collaboration with ABC Disney Corp.

Having a local Land Trust like Orange County Land Trust as a lead organization or partner in major open space projects will become even more essential and productive in the years ahead.

Collaborating on Orange County Open Space are Lou Mills; Orange County Planning Commissioner, Dave Church; and Palisades Interstate Park Coomissioner, Carol Ash.



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***“Best friend of land preservation in the
Hudson Valley” –Hudson Valley Magazine.***

In The Pipeline

Executive Director John Gebhards and our dedicated Land Protection Committee, chaired by Dr. Ralph Decker, are hard at work on several exciting projects, including:

- A 255-acre woodland preserve in Warwick that is home to a wonderful variety of ferns, wildflowers and animals;
- An historic racetrack in the Village of Monroe that will be open to the public for walking and jogging, and possibly for events such as the Cheese Festival;
- A 90-acre wooded ridgeline preserve that will protect the headwaters of Tuckamoos Creek in Minisink;
- A 26-acre wooded glacial moraine at the foot of Mt. Eve;
- Several additional parcels on the Shawangunk Ridge, which will provide further protection for that scenic ridgeline, as well as for bears, bobcats and other animals that den on the ridges;
- A 100-acre preserve that will provide open green space adjoining a village center, and possible habitat for the endangered bog turtle.

But we need your help to make these projects happen! Generous donations from our supporters will keep John, Ralph and the dedicated volunteers on this committee working hard to protect these special places on our county!

ORANGE COUNTY LAND TRUST

The mission of the Orange County Land Trust is to preserve the fields, forests, wetlands, ridgelines, and river corridors in and around Orange County, through voluntary land conservation.

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Open Space News is published by the Orange County Land Trust

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Planned Giving Profile: Sharon Sprague



Excited about the progress the Land Trust is making in protecting the Orange County we all love, many people have told us they are including us in their estate planning. When we asked Sharon Sprague why she had included the Land Trust, here is what she said:

"Each time I drive the back roads of this beautiful valley I call home — this place where I have raised my children — I am glad for the choice I've made. When memories of hiking through the forested ridges, stopping by fresh water streams to rest, fill me with gratitude, I know it was the right decision. Just over the hill, an expansive swath of land meeting uncluttered azure horizons: our inheritance. Remembering the Orange County Land Trust in my will is a way to support their efforts to preserve the treasured open spaces of our Hudson Valley home, and to thank them for what they have done. In my association with the Land Trust, I am affirmed in the worthiness of their effort. Through my bequest, taking to heart the covenant we all have with the land, I am saying thank you, for myself and on behalf of those who come after."

If you have included the Land Trust in your will or wish to do so, we'd love to hear from you, and of course that information will be held in confidence if you wish. If you'd like to create a gift for the Land Trust, it can be as simple as executing a codicil (like a P.S. or Appendix to your will) naming the Orange County Land Trust as a beneficiary. Contact your attorney or our office for more information.

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