



# Friends of the Great Swamp



FrOGS

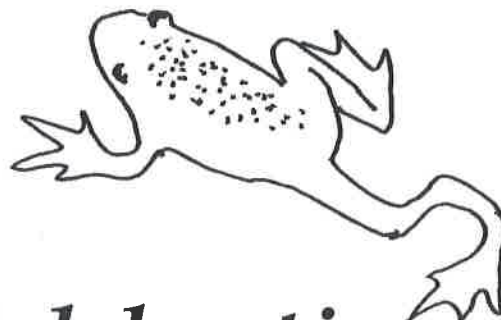
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## *Great Swamp Celebration & Art Show – Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>*



NANCY CLARK

J. Kelley - 10/20/07

# "It all started with the Dump!"

## *Remembering Tom Keasbey and his contribution to the creation of FrOGS*

Edie Keasbey was recently asked how she and her husband Tom first got involved with what was to become Friends of the Great Swamp or FrOGS. "It all started with the dump", Edie recalled, "and it progressed naturally from there to the creation of FrOGS."

Both Edie and Tom were activists in the 1989-90, fight to prevent locating a dumpsite within an arms length of the Great Swamp in Patterson. The Great Swamp's notoriety gained the attention of the Regional Plan Association. The RPA conducts studies of the effect of regional growth on open space (green-space) in the Tri-State area. They design reports to provide local, State, and Federal agencies with accurate ecological data and recommendations for protecting their natural resources.

A loosely organized Great Swamp Advisory Committee worked for two years with the RPA to publish *The Great Swamp Conservation Plan* in 1991. This was the first written collection of scientific data and conservation strategies for the south flow of the Great Swamp. The Advisory Committee was composed of members from the D.E.C., The Wildlife Conservation Society, Save Open Spaces, the Planning Departments of Putnam and Dutchess, D.E.P., The Nature Conservancy, the State University at Purchase, Ducks Unlimited and local conservation commissions in Putnam and Dutchess. Edie and Tom Keasbey were representatives from the Patterson Conservation Advisory Board.

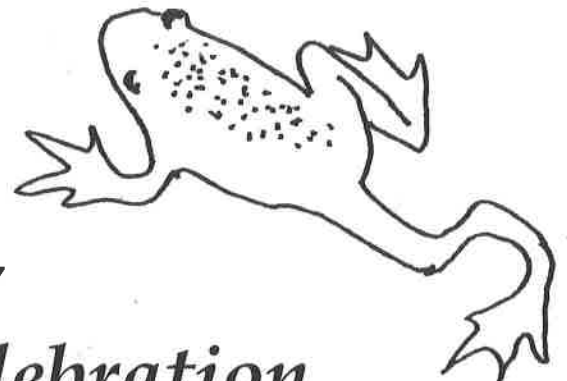
The Nature Conservancy remained committed to work on the foundation laid by the RPA. After publishing *The Great Swamp a Watershed Conservation Strategy*, a more comprehensive study of both the north and south flow in 1999, there was a need to get serious about shaping the Advisory Committee into a strong "grassroots" organization that would raise public awareness as well as create local governmental support for protecting the Great Swamp. All of the work done by the Advisory Committee, the Regional Plan Association and the Nature Conservancy would flounder without a commit-



ted local organization willing to act on the recommendations and strategies produced in both reports.

Tom Keasbey volunteered to do whatever was needed to get this new group "Friends of the Great Swamp" or FrOGS, off to a good start. Tom's commitment to protect the Great Swamp and his warm personality helped to pull the group together. He agreed to act as FrOGS' first chairman. Tom organized the meetings and tackled all the paperwork required to incorporate FrOGS as a non-profit organization. Tom also helped create FrOGS first "Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show" to raise public awareness of the Great Swamp as a special place in need of protection.

Always a gentleman, Tom lived his life in concert with his beliefs without pausing to calculate the time or effort involved. The creation of FrOGS is only part of Tom Keasbey's legacy to the land and the people he loved. He will be missed.



# The 2007 Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show

Saturday, October 20th, 11 AM-5 PM    Sunday, October 21st, 1 PM-4 PM

The Francis Ryan Memorial Hall, Christ Church, Church Street, Quaker Hill, Pawling, NY

*Meet friends and neighbors, enjoy the show and the fall scenery and help support FrOGS' continued effort to protect the Great Swamp watershed.*

## EVENTS

**ARTISTS**—wildlife and nature photographers, painters, potters, printmakers, and others will display and sell their work...**EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS**—handouts, experts and information on wildlife and conservation issues...**MUSICIANS**—

*Shirl Lawrence and Steve Kaplan* fill our senses with songs that accompany the art...**FrOGS**—famous, fabulous, colorful tee shirts and hats for sale...

**FOOD**—the *Hamiltons* will present show goers with a tasty spread of seasonal fare...**A SLIDE SHOW & VIDEO**—display the seasonal beauty of the swamp and some of its unique wildlife...**LIVE BIRDS**

**OF PREY**—*Jim Eyring* of Pace University's Environmental Center will share his knowledge of these marvelous birds and thrill us with their skill in the air...

**FOR THE YOUNGSTERS**—Debbie Mumford's, *"The Nature of Things"*, lets children get up close to live animals and learn about their care. Cherie Ingraham tells stories of animal environmentalist *"Chucky Goodnight"*, and does hands on nature craft with the children...**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**—display their artistic visions of the plants and animals in the swamp...**JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS**—exhibit their prize-worthy entries in the New York State Duck Stamp Competition...**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**—will compete for prizes in the third annual *Peter Dunlop Art Competition*.

**DIRECTIONS:** At the light on Route 22, just north of Route 55 in Pawling turn up Quaker Hill Road and follow until it ends at Mizzentop Road, turn right, pass the Aiken Library, Christ Church will be visible on Church Road to the right.

Call Evelyn Chiarito 845-877-6498 to help at the show.



NANCY CLARK

# Calendar of Events

## October thru November 2007

Friends of the Great Swamp (FrOGS) and Putnam Land Trust (PCLT)

*For information on Putnam Land Trust Programs (PLT) please call 845-225-5635.*

### OCTOBER

**Saturday, October 6 - (FrOGS)**

**A "Photo Workshop for Artists"**

with photographer Norman McGrath, Patterson.  
There is a fee, and registration is limited, call  
Nancy Clark at 845-878-9248. A camera and a  
"good eye" required equipment.

**Saturday, October 20 and**

**Sunday, October 21 (FrOGS)**

**Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show**

Christ Church, Quaker Hill, Pawling.

**Sunday, October 21- 1:00 (PCLT)**

**A Family "Fungi Stroll"**

Naturalist led identification walk for the whole  
family, The Dill Preserve, Carmel.

### NOVEMBER

**Saturday, November 3- 10:00 AM to 4 PM**

**2007 Health Expo**

Visit the Oblong Land Trust's booth and learn  
"How to Maintain a Healthy Backyard" at the  
2007 Health Expo, with over 50 exhibitors and  
demos on health and fitness, Lathrop Center,  
Lakeside Park, Pawling.

**Sunday, November 4- 1:00 (PCLT)**

**Tools, Toys and Food of the**

**Eastern Woodland Indians**

A family program about the daily life of the  
Eastern Woodland Indians. The Dorrie O'Brien  
House, Brewster

**Sunday, November 25- 1:00 (PCLT)**

**Adirondack Trail adventures**

Hiking expert will share his Adirondack Trail  
adventures and information on gearing up for  
the trip. Call for more information.

*Friends of the Great Swamp* is an organization dedicated to  
**Preserving the Great Swamp** through educational programs, scientific projects and  
special events and making all aware of this wonderful resource in our midst.

The generosity of our members and supporters extends FrOGS reach and  
effectiveness. Contributions support the efforts of the Education Committee,  
the Spring Celebration and this newsletter.

Please consider a tax deductible gift to FrOGS.

Send your gift to: **Friends of the Great Swamp**  
**P.O. Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Day \_\_\_\_\_ Night \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

#### WE NEED HELP

If you can lend a hand with any of the following,  
please check off the box and we will call you.

☐ Spring Celebration ☐ Publicity ☐ Mailings  
☐ Education Committee ☐ Art Show ☐ Other





# The River Otter

Otters are members of the weasel family and can weigh up to 30 pounds. They can be very curious and often fearless of humans. A male otter's territory can cover 15 - 30 miles of shoreline. Their diet is mostly fish, crayfish and amphibians. Superb swimmers, they are so efficient at catching their meals that they have time to play. Otters frolic together in the water and enjoy belly whopping down the mudslides they build on stream banks. They also create cleared depressions in the dirt called rolls. The otter scent-mark these areas, as well as mounds of debris and twists of flattened grasses with a mucous-like secretion called spraint. Otter sightings are not that common, but the presence of otter scat on high points and peninsulas bordering a watercourse is a definite indication of their presence. The appearance of otter scat depends on diet. It can be dark and greasy or full of silvery fish scales and it can even be red when filled with crayfish parts.

"Many people are surprised to learn that there are River Otters in the Great Swamp. In fact, the Great Swamp has a thriving and increasing population of Otters. One reason for this is perhaps the increasing beaver population in the swamp. Beaver are very good at creating habitat for other mammals, birds, and fish. Otters like the ponds beavers create behind their dams. Otters will also use abandoned beaver lodges for their own homes. One day this September, I happened to meet Bud Taney, president of the Patterson Sportsman's Club and frequent visitor to the swamp while we were both canoeing in the swamp. He told me he had just spotted a family of otters emerging from an abandoned beaver lodge.

Most of the otter I have seen have been in the winter. Otters will swim under the ice and main-

tain access holes and natural openings to come to the surface of the ice to eat and travel. Many times I've seen partially eaten fish, fish scales, and crayfish shells scattered near openings in the ice where the otters have been feeding. The most interesting thing about winter otter sightings has to do with their method of travel over the ice

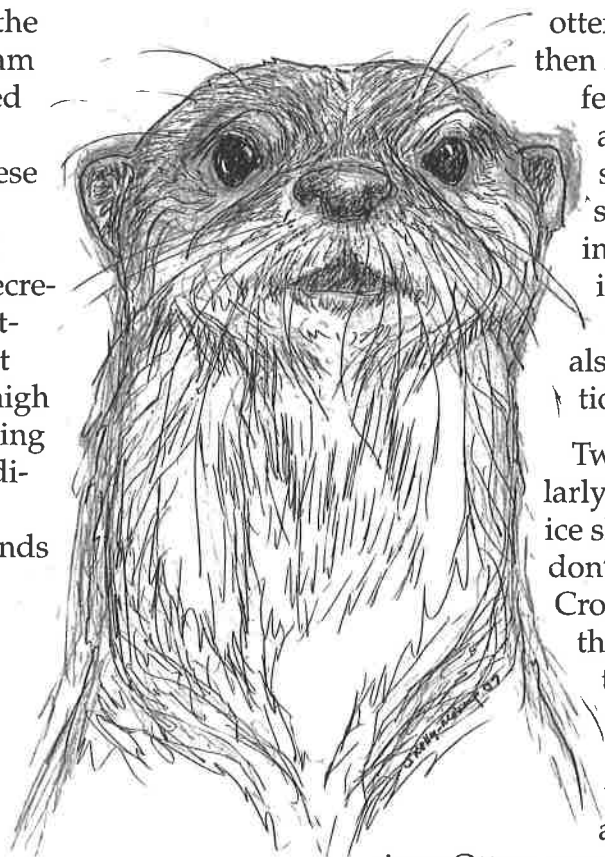
and lightly snow-covered ice. An otter will run about five steps and then slide on its belly for several feet and repeat this for miles at a time. The first time I found a set of tracks like this was on a snow cover of about two inches if it's more than four inches deep the belly slide is no longer effective. They will also use this method of locomotion on ice with no snow cover.

Two years ago during a particularly cold December, I was able to ice skate down the Great Swamp. I don't recommend this as the Croton River has a current and the ice can be very tricky. About two miles from my starting point in the Patterson Environmental Park I came upon a family of four otters in an unfrozen section of the

river. Otters are usually very shy but this group was very interested in me. They faced me directly and growled and hissed at me and swam off a little way and turned and raised themselves out of the water and growled and hissed at me again and then submerged and were gone. That was one of the few times I have ever had more than a fleeting glimpse of these elusive creatures.

Winter will soon be here and with the cold weather and frozen terrain, the Great Swamp becomes much more accessible. Perhaps you'd like to join us for our annual winter hike. Maybe we'll see some otters or at least some of their unusual tracks."

By FrOGS' board member Rick Saracelli



# "Why do we care about biodiversity?"

Teeming with life, yet eerily silent, the Great Swamp is a place where time stands still, and where nature exists in mute awareness of the never-ending cycle of life. According to Merriam Webster, biodiversity is "biological diversity in an environment indicated by numbers of different species of plants and animals." With local land being so fragile and the consequences of the domino effect always lingering in the near future, it is important to maintain our town's biodiversity. Biodiversity in our local and world community has been looked at and talked about due to the recent influx of housing developments, depletion of our natural resources, global warming, and industrialization.

Living in an area that is growing exponentially, we sometimes fail to look at what our recent expansion is doing to our community. Due to the recent influx of people moving into Pawling, residents have been talking about purchasing more land and expanding the school. It will take away from the natural habitat of animals and decreases the amount of biodiversity our town and the surrounding area possesses. Even the Great Swamp, one of Pawling's natural resources, is under pressure and is suffering from the lack of care and rapid population growth.

The Great Swamp is one of Pawling's largest natural resources and also boasts a large amount of biodiversity. The Great Swamp is home to about 20 species of mammals, 36 species of reptiles and amphibians, 64 species of butterflies, and protects 58 species of dragonflies and damselflies. A recent study has shown that the Great Swamp harbors 180 species of birds using the Great Swamp as a migratory flyway. Also 100 species use it as a permanent place to take residency. Caring about The Great Swamp's 200-acre freshwater wetland and more than 63,000 acre of watershed is vital to the preservation of numerous flora and fauna including; 19 plants, 10 reptiles and amphibians, three butterflies and seven natural communities that are rare in New York State and some even globally.

Life in a country environment once full of farms and now rapidly evolving into suburbia, affects the biodiversity of the town, especially



The Oblong Land Conservancy conducted its second annual essay contest for Pawling high school seniors and the results are in: First Prize (\$1000) was won by Michael Mascarenhas, second prize of \$500 was awarded to Matthew Konchan, and the third prize of \$250 was taken by Jillian Warga. Oblong Board Chairman, Chris Wood, hands Matthew Konchan, second prize winner, his award.

The Great Swamp. The storm water runoff transmits detrimental substances into The Great Swamp from construction sites, dirt roads, salt piles, wastewater, farm fertilizer, septic systems, and other sources. If people were more educated and aware of the negative impact these non-natural substances have on biodiversity people would take more care about what they feed into the environment. Low biodiversity can result in less stability in an ecosystem and causes overpopulation in the natural world which can lead to its self destruction. For example, in our area there is an over abundance of loosestrife an exotic plant species replacing native vegetation. Although the attractive purple flower is seen to be aesthetically pleasing it is hindering the future growth and development of plant diversity in our area.

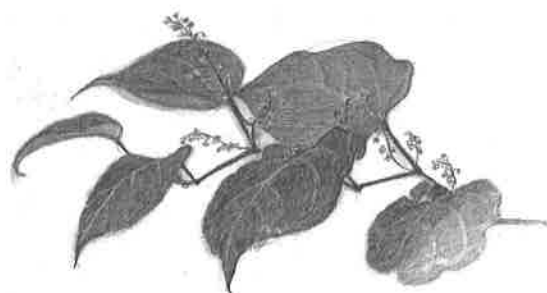
In sum, biodiversity and what we do to preserve and protect our Great Swamp is the responsibility of the citizens of Pawling. What we do today can help preserve the biodiversity of The Great Swamp for the benefit and well being of plants, animals, and the people of Pawling alike

*\*Mathew's essay was edited by Judy Kelley-Moberg to fit the newsletter's format.*

# Alien Invasion

The following plants are on the Invasive Plant Council of NYS' list of common invasive plants and can be found in both Putnam and Dutchess Counties.

These plants share the following characteristics: 1. They are not native, 2. They are rapid growers and kill the native vegetation by blocking out sunlight and competing for nutrients or they may choke and strangle the plants they swarm over. 3. They destroy the diversity that existed in the native plant population and dominate the ecosystem. 4. The lack of diversity they create affects local wildlife populations that depended on native plants for food and shelter. 5. They affect normal plant succession, 6. They are difficult to eradicate or control.



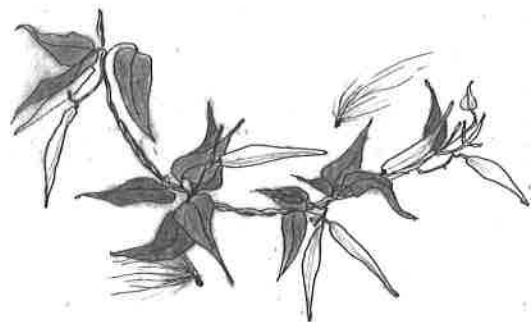
**Japanese Knotweed**

This 6 to 8 foot plant grows in dense stands that remind one of a bamboo grove. Young shoots and leaves are maroon or red before maturing to a yellow-green color. The heart shaped leaves are borne on drooping branches that also bear short fronds of fragrant white flowers (attractive to bees) in late summer. Small stands of knotweed may even look attractive, but as they spread in ever increasing masses along streamsides, roadsides and into the wetlands they become alarming invaders. No native vegetation can survive in the dark, dense stands of knotweed.

Cut the stalks down and new shoots sprout almost overnight. Continually mowing off the shoots helps but chemicals or black plastic may be necessary to wipe them out.

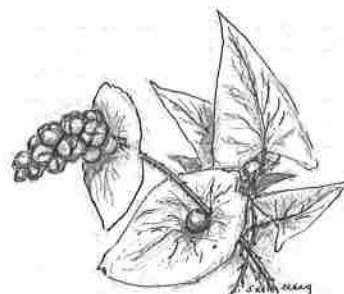
## **Swallow-wort or "Dog Strangling Vine"**

This rapidly growing vine is a member of the milkweed family. Pairs of glossy, dark green, spear-shaped leaves grow along the 3 to 6 foot vine. The clusters of tiny five-petaled, purple-brown flowers are almost unnoticeable. In the



fall the long, slender seedpods split open to let the wind disperse the seeds with their silky parachutes. The vine spreads in a dense mat over low growing vegetation blocking out the sunlight.

The seeds can survive in the soil for more than 2 years. Plants can be pulled before seed dispersal but are best dug out since they also propagate from rhizomes. Black plastic and chemicals may be a last resort.



## **Mile-a-minute vine or "devil's tear-thumb"**

This annual vine can grow as much as 6 inches a day and more than 20 feet in a year! The prickly barbs on its stem enable the vines to crawl over everything in their path including trees. The regular leaves are triangular but the stem is encircled with unusual leaves called ocrea. Each ocrea looks like it was pierced by the stem and strung along its length. In July clusters of small, round, iridescent blue fruit appear. Birds disperse the seeds, which can also float to new areas and are viable in the ground for up to five years.

Pull vines before they fruit, but if fruit is present the vines and fruit **MUST** be placed in black plastic bags and cooked in the sun for at least a month to kill the seeds. If it can be done legally, burn the vines and fruit right away. The Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve is extremely concerned about the spread of this vine. If you would like to volunteer to help or to report an infestation, please call 845-889-4745 or log on to their website at [hrnerr@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:hrnerr@gw.dec.state.ny.us).

# The Swamp River Assessment Challenge

The Swamp River is the north flow of the Great Swamp and a tributary of the Tenmile River, which flows into the Housatonic River in Connecticut. The Swamp River begins a little south of the Village of Pawling and runs northward through Dover to enter the Tenmile River. FrOGS plans to work with the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), NY Watershed manager Tonya Shoumatoff, and Cornell Cooperative Extension to assess the quality of, and the threats to, the Swamp River.



AJ, Ray & Mike collecting samples in the Swamp River entering the Tenmile River.

The proposed Swamp River study is a continuation of the Housatonic Valley Association's study of the Tenmile River from 2004-2006. The results were published in the *Tenmile River Assessment, a Shoreline Survey and Action Plan*. For more information on this study check NY@hvatoday.org or call 860-672-6678.

Teams of volunteers were trained to identify impairments and problems along the river as well as how to fill out the Natural Resource Conservation Survey form. The form assesses; existing land use, channel condition, width, depth, hydrology, riparian zone, bank stability, water appearance, nutrient enrichment, barriers to fish, in-stream fish cover, pools, insect habitat, canopy cover and embeddedness.

Team members waded in and walked alongside a one to two mile section of the Tenmile River, recording data and taking pictures. They also monitored the river's water quality through macro-invertebrate sampling. FrOGS' board

members Evelyn and Joe Chiarito as well as members Mary Borrelli and Marianne Pitts participated in assessment teams. The survey found that the overall condition of the Tenmile was very good. The most significant issues were bank erosion due to clear-cutting and ATV traffic as well as the litter created by illegal household and construction dumping.

This fall FrOGS will partner with the same groups that conducted the Tenmile River study in order to develop a strategy to study the Swamp River.

The Swamp River presents a whole new set of challenges not present in the Tenmile. The Tenmile is fairly accessible to study teams, as it's generally wide, fast moving and shallow with a rocky bottom, and a definite bank. The Swamp River is not very accessible, often deep, slow moving and narrow, with a muddy bottom and dense overhanging vegetation. In other areas it spreads out and flows through swamps and forested floodplains.

Housatonic Valley Association teams, the NY Watershed Manager, DEC, DEP, and Cornell Cooperative Extension will be meeting with Jim Utter and our newest board member Mike Purcell from FrOGS to devise a study plan unique to the Swamp River.



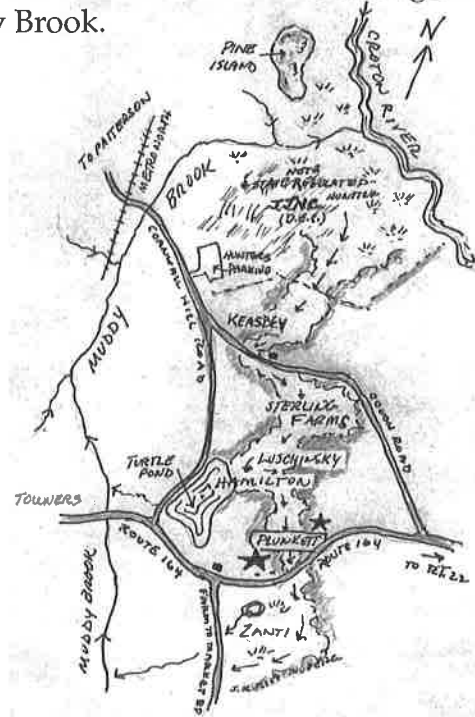
Shoreline typical of the Swamp River.



# The Newest NAWCA Land Acquisition Is A Small But Important Link

This small 5.5 acre piece of what was once the Brandon Dairy farm was acquired from Kay (Brandon) Plunkett and her husband Frank. The parcel is mostly forested ridgeline with areas of exposed rocky cliff faces. Several of the NAWCA grant acquisitions containing a variety of habitats can now be linked together. The wetland parcels in the Great Swamp below Pine Island connect to the JJNC meadows held by the DEC, through a small corner lot donated by Tom and Edie Keasbey across Couch Road to the wooded ridgeline trails in the Sterling Farm Preserve (Putnam Land Trust) then down to sections of the former Luschinsky property and Hamilton acquisitions above Turtle Pond (Mendel's Pond) to the Plunkett piece which will connect them to Route 164. The Route 164 access point will then connect to the former Zanti property east of Farm to Market Road. Now held by the Putnam Land Trust, this large property contains a spring fed pond and cattail marsh. Beaver have recently flooded the area by damming up the outflow pipe that flows under Farm to Market Road and into the Muddy Brook drainage.

The Plunkett parcel will play an important role as an animal corridor as well as a vital link in a trail system that can now cross Route 164 and connect these varied habitats from the Croton River to the Ice Pond Drainage at Muddy Brook.



## Hudson Highlands Coalition News

FrOGS is a member of The Hudson Highlands Coalition, a conservation group whose members are drawn from the states that encompass the mountain range. Several years ago the Hudson Highlands Bill was passed in Washington, DC with a significant amount of money earmarked for environmental protection of endangered open space in the Highlands. The governors of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut prioritized environmental projects in each state for funding. This year was the first time a portion of the funding was available and it was used to enhance the Sterling Forest area. In 2008, part of any available funding is to go to The Great Swamp, which was given a high priority by our past Governor George Pataki.

The New York chapter recently discussed the successful passage of The Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act which will allow municipalities in Putnam and Westchester to have

the option of creating Community Preservation Funds based on an up to 2% real estate transfer tax.

David Greenblatt, is currently working on the creation of a series of overlay maps that will prioritize lands in the Highlands that are either threatened or have values that would earmark them for protection. The maps should help communities conduct open space inventories to support use of the Community Preservation Funds.

Jim Tripp, is writing a memo to Governor Spitzer outlining the rationale for and requesting that; land use planning and conservation concerns are taken seriously in conjunction with transportation expansion projects in the lower Hudson Valley. This would impact projects like the expansion of the Route 22 corridor along the Great Swamp in our area

Judy Kelley Moberg, representing FrOGS on the Communication Committee of HHC.