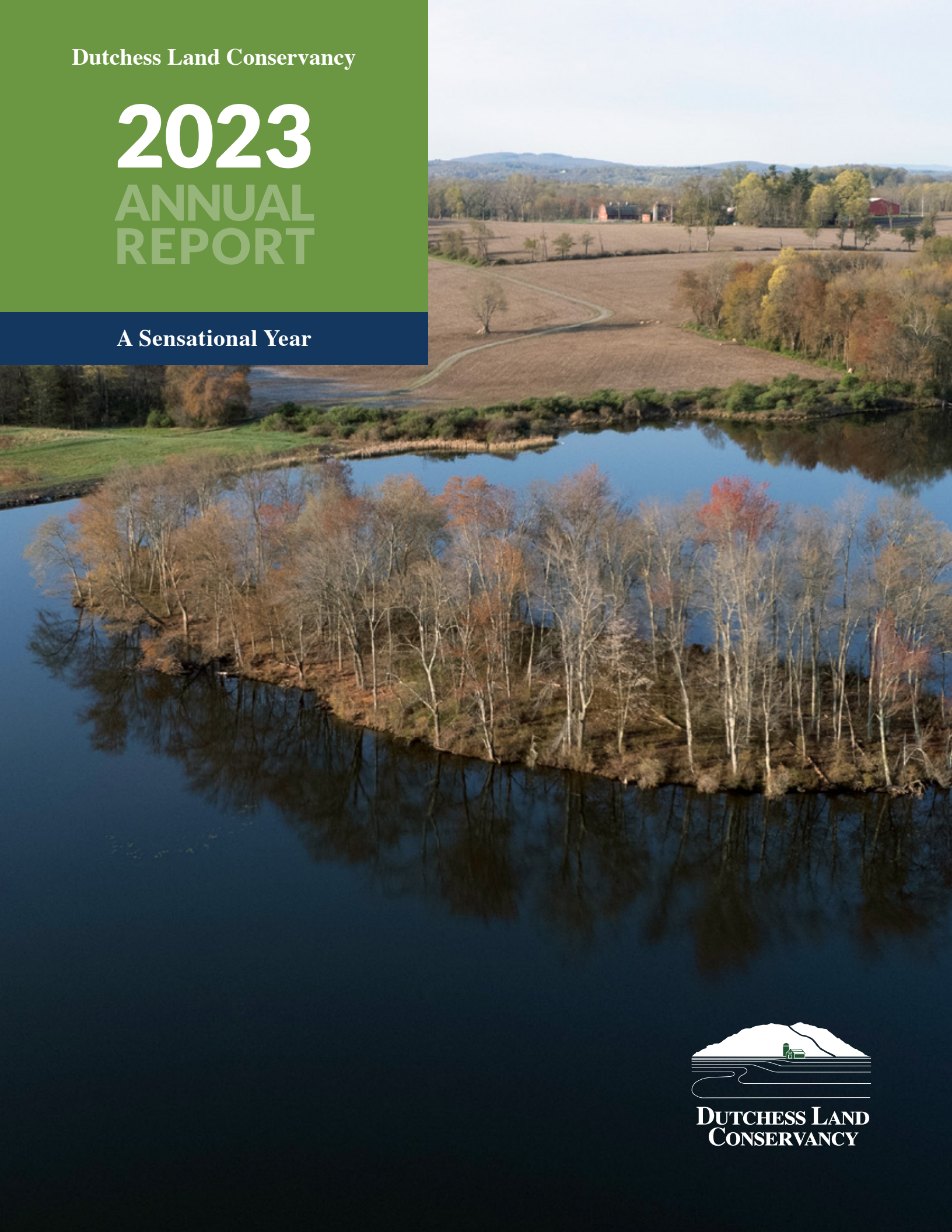


Dutchess Land Conservancy

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

A Sensational Year



Our Mission

The Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is dedicated to preserving the scenic, agricultural, and environmental resources of Dutchess County, New York, and the surrounding areas.

The DLC encourages sound, well-planned growth balanced with the conservation of our important natural resources and working landscapes to ensure healthy and vibrant communities for the benefit of all generations.

Through voluntary land transactions with private landowners, conservation land planning assistance, and public education, the DLC works to protect land while helping to channel new growth in ways which will reinforce our natural and agricultural landscapes and create balanced and sustainable communities.

At the DLC we believe that a healthy economy and a healthy environment go hand-in-hand.

Our Vision

As the DLC accomplishes its mission, the result of our work will help ensure:

- Traditional small villages and hamlets surrounded by large expanses of protected farm and forest land, with scenic views that inspire what people love most about this area.
- Sustainable working farms, supported by the community, that include the production of local, healthy foods, healthy forests and timber supplies, as a part of everyday life.
- Connected corridors that ensure diverse and well-functioning ecosystems that provide numerous benefits for human and habitat health and wellbeing including clean drinking water.
- The opportunity for people to enjoy the outdoors and appreciate important natural areas and open spaces which inspires their love of and connection to nature and reinforces their sense of home.

Front Cover Photo Credit: Andrew Pelletier



A Letter from the President



It was another amazing year for the DLC! You may recall that in 2022, we experienced a number of firsts: the remarkable donation of our first public preserve in the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve, the generous gift of the Perkins Home as our new headquarters, and the launch of our volunteer program. While exciting, those were just the start.

In 2023, we strove to meet the challenges presented by these new ventures in many and varied ways. We began developing a new management plan for the Bontecou Preserve that included a habitat study of the land and its inhabitants so we could have a true understanding of the many species now under our care. We also engaged in a farmland study to help ensure the healthy quality of our critical soils and water. We established a strategy for the Perkins Home and how it could best be utilized as our new home and scientific research and education facility. We expanded on our volunteer program and made the opportunities bigger and bolder than they had been in its first year.

We are incredibly thrilled that in 2023 we worked with seven landowners adding another 445 acres of new conserved property, a testament to the conservation-minded community members that make Dutchess County such a special place. We are exceptionally proud that some of the land protected will benefit diverse groups of people in their communities through neighborhood parks, affordable housing, and working farms. Our education programs expanded with the inclusion of fun new activities like Moth Night and the Nature Exploration Backpacks that can be found in libraries throughout the area. Our stewardship team continued to answer the call, ground and air monitoring hundreds of properties.

I am so proud of the remarkable year we had. We set a high bar with a phenomenal year in 2022 yet were able to rise even higher in 2023. And that's thanks to you! It's through the generosity and dedication of you that we are able to accomplish so much and continue to protect the natural resources and scenic views of Dutchess County. We continue to be marveled by the devotion and commitment of our supporters, volunteers, collaborators, event attendees, partners, and the owners and stewards of our treasured land.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Becky".

Becky Thornton
President



Land Conservation

Beginning in 1985 with the protection of 250 acres, the DLC's land preservation efforts have grown to a remarkable 46,500 acres of protected land. Each year, the DLC adds more of the precious lands and resources of Dutchess County and the Hudson Valley to its roster of conserved properties, and 2023 was no exception. Critical farmland, forests, meadows, streams, parks, and even affordable housing were all a part of our conservation efforts.

Recognized nationally and within New York State and the Hudson Valley region, the DLC produces customized land preservation plans that secure forever the unique natural, scenic, and rural characteristics of each property it protects. Motivated by a love of the surrounding countryside and all it holds, our aspirations are to protect vital habitats for animals to reside in and move through connected corridors; to safeguard our wetlands, lakes, streams, ponds, aquifers, and floodplains so they continue to provide safe clean drinking water; to expand upon the large bodies of contiguous protected forests that produce oxygen, sequester carbon, and mitigate the effects of climate change; and to conserve the beloved farms that provide us with fresh local food while also offering the bucolic views that give this area such charm. We seek to protect these lands today, tomorrow, and forever so that all may delight in the majestic bounty that the natural world provides.

The following properties were protected by local landowners working with the DLC.



BOUZANE-BUSER – 10 acres, Town of Washington

Boasting magnificent views of the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve and surrounding countryside, property owners Gayten Bouzane and Charles Buser knew their land would be a critical addition to the DLC's land preservation efforts. In addition to the property's open and natural character, its protection provides for the expansion of essential wildlife corridors and critical feeding and breeding habitat.



WHITE ROCK FAM – 34 acres, Town of Washington

Adding to an extensive swath of contiguously protected land, White Rock Farm – visible from Route 343 and Butts Hollow Road – is characterized by stunning vistas and expansive farmland. Owners Lee Pace and Steven Pregiato had grown to know and love their farm so well that they wanted to protect it and add to a vast unbroken tract of woodland that extends for hundreds of acres, and ensure that future generations will reap the benefits of it being preserved forever.



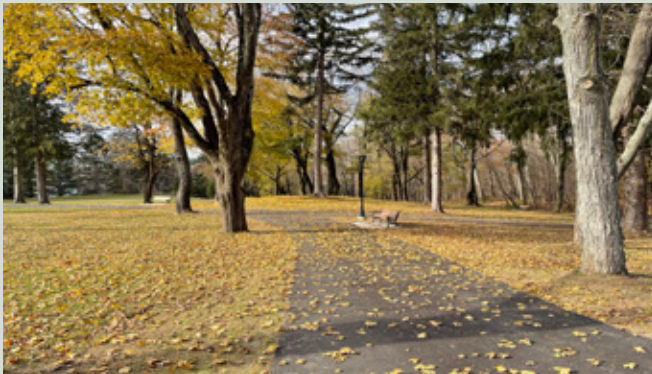
COOKINGHAM – 169 acres, Town of Red Hook

Located in the “Red Hook Breadbasket,” an area that contains more than 1,600 acres of conserved land, protection of the two vast Cookingham Farms was considered critical for the agricultural future of northwestern Dutchess County. The Town of Red Hook, Scenic Hudson, and the DLC worked together to permanently protect the lands, ensuring that their 200-year farming heritage would continue. Besides their agricultural importance, the properties also serve as an important historic gateway into the Village of Red Hook, prized by residents for the panoramic views stretching to the Catskills. Additionally, portions of the easement will be used to increase parkland in the area and add recreational trails for public use. RUPCO, a non-profit organization focused on affordable housing needs in the Hudson Valley, is working with the Town to develop 12 separate acres of the property to address the housing needs of local families.



REDMOND-CROSSLEY – 24 acres, Town of Pine Plains

Joan Redmond and Susan Crossley jumped at the chance to purchase and preserve the former Kunze property, knowing that a few of the surrounding farms were already protected with DLC easements. They had been diligent caretakers of their land and 1700s-built home for more than 30 years and wanted to ensure that the area would retain its unparalleled beauty, including gorgeous open fields, meadows, and wooded slopes. Bordering other properties protected by the DLC, the preservation of this land creates large connected corridors for native plants and animals. With both active agriculture on the land and wild forested portions, this property exemplifies the importance of private landowners seeking to save the rural character of this area. “We are thrilled to do our little part for preservation,” said Joan Redmond on the establishment of the easement.



BENNETT PARK LLC – 34 acres, Town of Washington

Once the grounds of the historic Bennett College, Bennett Park is now a beautiful gateway to the Village of Millbrook and is within walking distance to the center of town. Where dilapidated structures once stood, the winding paths of Bennett Park now invite the public to enjoy the bucolic nature of central Dutchess. With funding provided by Dutchess County’s Manageable Growth Program, Millbrook Community Partnership, a local non-profit dedicated to the refurbishment and preservation for public use of local properties, placed a conservation easement on the property that will forever preserve an accessible rural and scenic gateway treasured by a whole community.



AFARM LLC – 174 acres, Town of Washington

Across the Shunpike from the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve lies the iconic Rally Farm. Long a treasured sight in central Dutchess, this spectacular farm is now forever protected thanks to its conservation-minded owners, Ruthie Bontecou and husband Lincoln Lyman. The farm is characterized by its scenic views, open farmland, woodlands, wetlands, and great natural beauty. In addition to its significant agricultural benefits, the property also contains valuable wetlands. These sensitive riparian areas are among the most vital for their importance in mitigating the effects of climate change. The conserved woodland on the property adds to the acres of preserved forest within central and northern Dutchess County that has seen a resurgence of larger mammals like black bears, coyotes, and bobcats. Most of all, though, the protection of Rally Farm preserves an important historical agricultural legacy, providing future Dutchess County residents the rewards of its owners’ forethought.

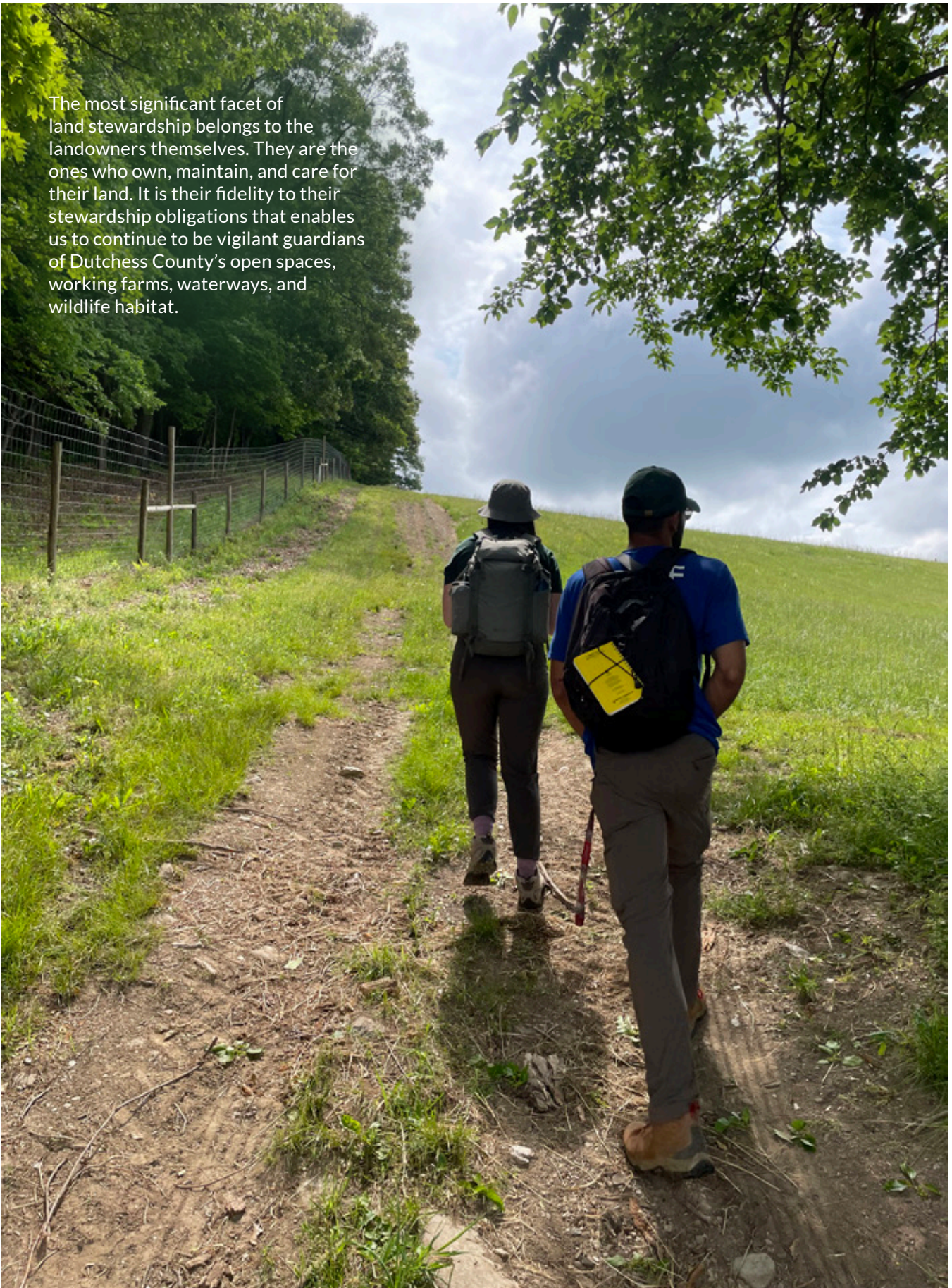
Stewardship of the Land

Each year, thanks to the foresight of landowners who understand the intrinsic value of preserving land, the acreage protected by the DLC continues to grow. The continued effort of these private property holders has led to the robust amount of conserved land in and around Dutchess County. As the number of conservation easements under the DLC's care has grown, so too have our responsibilities, including a perpetual commitment to assist the landowners with the ongoing stewardship of their protected properties. We are honored to work with more than 400 environmentally conscious stewards who own land protected by conservation easements.

As of the end of 2023, the DLC held 444 easements on more than 46,500 acres of land, numbers that continue to grow each year. To aid them in their expanding monitoring duties, our stewardship team employs cutting-edge technology, including ArcGIS online mapping accounts, and is regularly seeking out new ways to improve capacity and efficiency. Even the best technology, however, can't compete with the human eye when it comes to easement monitoring. Our stewardship staff hiked over 300 miles through a variety of weather and ground conditions as they monitored one-third of the easements under our care. Additionally, they perform the dizzying task each year of aerially monitoring each and every easement.



The most significant facet of land stewardship belongs to the landowners themselves. They are the ones who own, maintain, and care for their land. It is their fidelity to their stewardship obligations that enables us to continue to be vigilant guardians of Dutchess County's open spaces, working farms, waterways, and wildlife habitat.



Education

The DLC's mission includes an educational component that is both crucial and thriving. By involving the community in our work through our learning programs, we are helping people of all walks to realize the importance of our local natural environment, best stewardship practices, and the importance of land conservation. In 2023, we hosted 26 educational events that helped us to interact with a diverse audience of more than 2,500 people and partner with 31 different organizations. Our expansive array of educational programs included in-person walks and discussions, online webinars, and opportunities for people of all ages to learn something new about the world in which we live. Here's a look at just a few of them:



DUTCHESS COUNTY 4-H SCHOLARSHIPS

Eighteen youth of Dutchess County 4-H wrote heartwarming essays that displayed the joy they found in their work and in the world around us and were awarded funds through the DLC's scholarship program, which is designed to help individual 4-H members with the costs associated with attending the Dutchess County Fair.



GEOLOGY WALK

Guests were captivated by vibrant young local geologist Becky Nesel as she led them on a walk that showcased the power of plate tectonics and glaciation in shaping our land at the Dover Stone Church Preserve.

NATURE EXPLORATION BACKPACKS

Through funding provided by a Dutchess County Learn, Play, Create grant, 50 backpacks that the children of Dutchess County can check out from each of Dutchess County's town libraries were created and distributed by the DLC on five topics of natural and scientific inquiry, with corresponding "how-to" videos on the DLC's website.



EARTH MATTERS WINTER WEBINAR SERIES

Audiences delighted in the second season of the DLC's winter webinar series – with soil as the primary topic – as it came to a close in April, and then were enthralled when our third season began in November, with the theme shifting from the world underneath our feet to the Hudson Valley all around us.

WOODCOCK WALK

In what is fast becoming an annual tradition, attendees were thrilled to witness one of the great rites of early spring – the mating dance of the American Woodcock at the Buttercup Audubon Sanctuary.



MOTH NIGHTS

The magic of moths was on display for fascinated guests at two Moth Nights led by volunteer lepidopterist Matthew Rymkiewicz at the Whitlock Preserve in Stanfordville and Thompson Pond in Pine Plains.

OTHER PLACES TO SEE THE DLC IN 2023

- Environmental Justice Talk at Millbrook School
- Vernal Pool Presentation at Pawling Library
- Pine Plains High School Career Fair
- Pleasant Valley Green Fair
- Equitable Conservation Presentation at Millbrook School
- Dover Earth Day
- Amenia Earth Day
- Dutchess County Earth Day Fair
- Stanford Community Garden Walk
- LaGrange Library Hiking Club Ecological Walk
- "What's the Rush?" Film Panel Discussion
- Pollinator Day at Plan Bee Farm Brewery
- Ecological Boot Camp at Millbrook School
- Pine Plains AP Biology Class Presentation
- Soil Painting Workshop at Millbrook Library
- 4-H A-Fair to Remember at Millbrook Winery
- Garden & Woods Walks (2) at Wethersfield
- Wildflower Walk at Buttercup Farm Audubon Sanctuary
- Land Use History at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies
- Waterman Bird Club at Bontecou
- Pawling Farmers Market
- Down to Earth: Thompson Finch In-Person and Virtual Open Houses
- Geology Walk at Thompson Pond
- Environmental Science Class Presentation at Millbrook School
- Down to Earth: Thompson Finch Virtual Open House
- Down to Earth: Thompson Finch In-Person Open House

Volunteer & Community Science Program

Volunteers and community science members made the most of a larger scope of opportunities to improve nearby public spaces and aid environmental scientists with crucial data gathering at multiple locations. The many events brought together more than 300 conservation-minded citizens to accomplish important work in Dutchess County. Here are some of the highlights:



WELLS BROOK CLEAN-UP

More than two dozen volunteers started off the year planting native trees and shrubs along the banks of the Wells Brook in Dover Plains in a joint effort with the Housatonic Valley Association and the Hudson Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited. The day was capped off by the removal of many bags of trash collected in and around the streambed..



STISSING MOUNTAIN TRAIL WORK SERIES

On five different occasions in 2023, DLC volunteers climbed the steep slopes of Stissing Mountain in Pine Plains to help with the construction of a new trail connecting Thompson Pond to the fire tower atop the mountain. Many switchbacks were created and stone steps were installed to make the trail one that would provide easier access to the mountaintop.





EXPLORE STISSING

The volunteers' hard work culminated in the grand opening of the Stissing to Tower Trail at the Explore Stissing event, a collaboration between the DLC, The Nature Conservancy, and Friends of Stissing Landmarks. Besides the ribbon cutting at the entrance to the new trail, guests could partake in a multitude of walks, including pollinator, wetland, and fall plant walks, as well as a scavenger hunt for the kids.



FOLLOW THE FOREST TRAINING

Follow the Forest is an initiative created by the Housatonic Valley Association that will connect thousands of acres of forest from the Hudson River to the Canadian border. Volunteers are excited to be trained to identify potential forest linkages in our area through this collaboration between the DLC and the HVA.

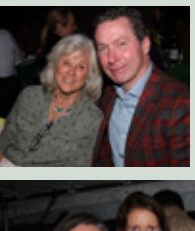


BIO-BLITZ WITH DUTCHESS PRIDE

Volunteers from Dutchess Pride identified hundreds of plant species and provided important data points for scientists who study our area in a fun and invigorating early winter Bio-Blitz at the Dover Stone Church.

2023 Spring Barn Dance

In May, more than 300 guests excitedly filled the indoor arena for a fun-filled evening at John Merryman's Merryfield Farm for the DLC's Spring Barn Dance, last held in 2019. Guests were treated to splendid décor, food, drinks, desserts, comradery, and celebration, and many concluded the evening by dancing to the lively tunes of the Silver Arrow Band.



2023 Fall Country Luncheon

The amazing Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve was celebrated at our October Fall Country Luncheon. The 400 guests attending the event toasted Gayle and the late Jesse Bontecou for the remarkable gift of this one-of-a-kind preserve. The fall setting on the shores of Bontecou Lake couldn't have been more perfect, with food, drinks, desserts, and – most of all – friendships that outshone the splendid weather. We are so grateful to all of our event attendees and sponsors for the marvelous generosity they show in helping to support the DLC's mission.

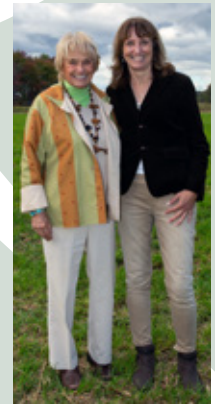


Photo Credits: Barbara Beatty Photography

DLC by the



46,500+
Acres Protected



20,500+
Acres of Farmland Protected

38

Years Protecting Land



300+
Volunteers



21,000+
Acres of Forests Protected



6,000+
Acres of Water Protected



e Numbers



26

Towns with DLC Protected Properties

52

Education & Outreach Events In 2023



6

New Properties Protected in 2023



88

Farmers/Landowner
Matches



300+

Miles Ground Monitoring
in 2021



444

Conservation Easements

Organizational Excellence

We are proud to be accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The Land Trust Accreditation seal is a symbol of excellence, trust, and permanence. It shows our commitment to national quality standards and that we have systems in place to keep to our promise of forever protecting the land under our care.



To better engage the public in our mission, the DLC's Board adopted a new Strategic Plan in 2021. The DLC's Staff and Board remain committed to following this Plan and providing stimulating, creative, and invigorating opportunities for all people to enjoy and experience the rewards of our natural environment. Launching exciting new initiatives, such as our expanding education and volunteer programs, the future opening of the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve, and enhancing our land protection efforts in the coming years are all results of this Plan.

Advocacy

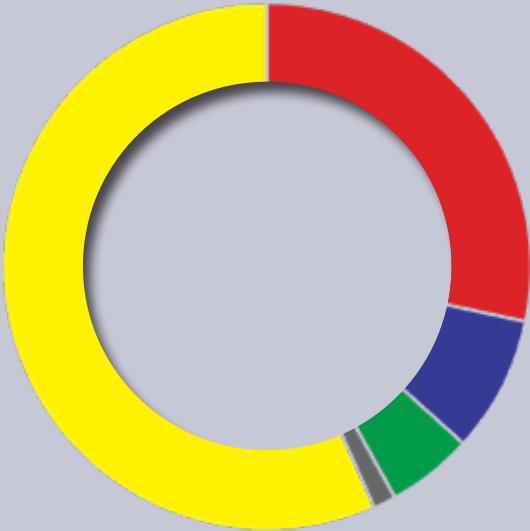
While much of the work we do happens due to local environmentally-conscious individuals who choose to conserve their land, there is much work being done on state, regional, and national levels that will benefit the health and well-being of Dutchess County residents now and in the future. As such, we advocate for measures like the Farm Bill, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Forest Legacy Program, the Highlands Conservation Act, and the 30 by 30 Conservation Initiative so there will be clean air and water for all people, to mitigate the effects of climate change, and to ensure that wildlife can thrive, as well as state-wide initiatives such as the Environmental Protection Fund, the Bond Act and funding for farm and forestland protection.





Financials

2023 REVENUES

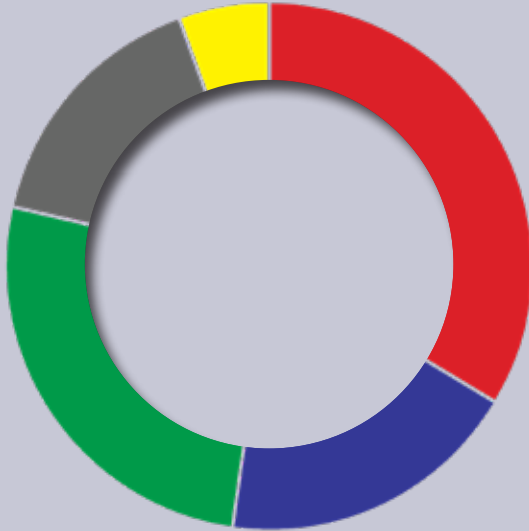


■ Individual Giving	\$1,770,496
■ Grants*	\$ 519,139
■ Special Events	\$ 327,142
■ Miscellaneous	\$ 78,562
■ Non-Operating Revenue/Loss**	\$3,516,137

Total \$6,211,476

* Includes Purchase of Development Rights
 ** Includes Special Gifts & Grants and Investment Results

2023 EXPENSES



■ Land Conservation*	\$ 757,705
■ Stewardship	\$ 412,956
■ Education	\$ 592,505
■ Administration	\$ 350,013
■ Development/Marketing	\$ 151,794

Total \$2,264,973

* Includes Purchase of Development Rights

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Oakleigh Thorne

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Olivia van Melle Kamp*

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Sharon Zampko, Accounting and Business Director
Georgina Schaeffer, Editor

Stewards of the Land

Stewards of the land are essential partners of the DLC. They are the ones who manage and steward their protected properties now and into the future.

18 Homan Rd LLC

Mr. Stephen Abel & Family -
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Mr. and Mrs. Ramzi Abu-Haidar

Ms. Claire Ackad

Mrs. Binti Ackley

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Ms. Erica De Mane

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Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

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Mr. Eliot C.L. Clarke

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Common Fire Foundation

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Conniff

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The Conservation and
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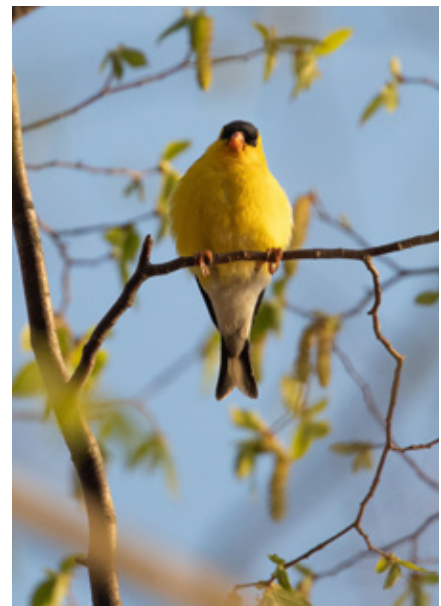
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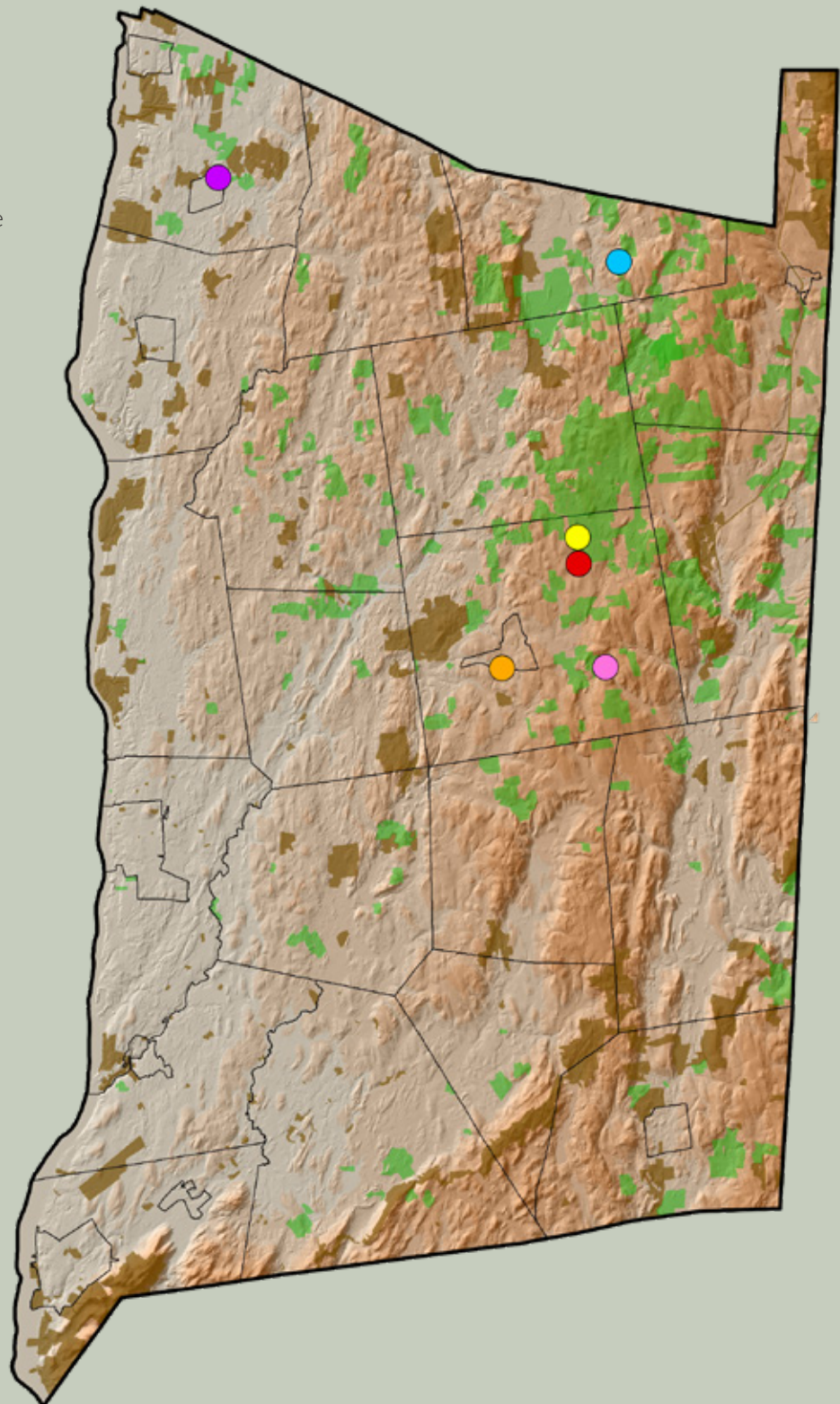
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