



GAINING GROUND

WINTER 2024/2025



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



As I sit down just after Thanksgiving weekend to write this letter it is, of course, a time to reflect on what I am most thankful for: my family and friends, my job at the DLC, the land that surrounds us, and for all of you who support our work with such enthusiasm! We've had another exceptional year reaching a new milestone of 47,000 acres forever preserved! Our outreach and education programs are growing and we have many new and returning volunteers who jumped right in to help. In October, we held our Fall Luncheon at the Jesse and Gail Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve with nearly 400 people raising more than a quarter of a million dollars for conservation.

The protection of Obercreek Farm, in the

Town of Wappinger, closed this Fall. You may remember reading about Alex Reese in our Fall 2022 newsletter, when he protected his neighboring 42 acres; you can now read how Alex and his family conserved the balance of the farm's 144 acres. This farm is critically important to this town where few farms remain.

At the end of October, the DLC was awarded \$350,000 by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to preserve a portion of Rattlesnake Mountain in Amenia – a portion of Laurelbrook Farm. This grant makes it possible to protect not only the ecological qualities of this climate resilient forest and its upland conifers and



hardwoods, but crucial wildlife corridors and the view from the Oblong Valley.

The following week we were able to announce the protection of 93 acres in Pleasant Valley by Jason and Mary Elizabeth Page. Their commitment reflects a profound understanding of the many ways that conservation enriches our lives and nurtures our ecosystems. This land will help ensure clean water in our watersheds, adds to a vast tract of contiguous forestland, protects critical wetlands, riparian habitats, floodplains and so much more.

It is with deep sadness that I also note the passing of DLC friend, Steward of the Land and wonderful supporter, Michael Rena. Survived by his wife, Kalliope, and children: James, Melinda, Brando and Edward, Michael was a distinguished, thoughtful, and kind man whose quiet brilliance and grace

infused his life. His compassion, keen sense of humor, and warmth will be greatly missed by all of us at the DLC and in this community and beyond.

As we turn the page to another year, I look forward to many more moments to celebrate in 2025 including our 40th anniversary! Thank you for so generously supporting our work, and I wish you all of the best for a happy and healthy new year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Becky".

Becky Thornton

EXPLORER'S NOTEBOOK



Is there any more mesmerizing activity than watching clouds? From low altitude, puffy white cumulus to thin and streaky, high altitude cirrus, clouds are an ever-changing, always moving and evolving spectacle. Cloud-watching is not just for kids! We can all benefit from taking a few moments, minutes or hours to gaze upwards and marvel at these wondrous formations.

Clouds are frequently thought of as being harbingers of wet weather, but there are fair-weather clouds too! When the skies are blue, the puffy “cotton wool” clouds known as cumulus can appear. The word “cumulus” comes from the Latin word for “heap” or “pile”, and every kid knows these as the easiest clouds to draw.

They are also the most fun to watch as they morph and change their shape...it’s a piece of broccoli...a duck...a car...the Starship Enterprise! Like all clouds, cumulus clouds are formed from water, and because these are low altitude clouds the water is in the form of tiny droplets.

In contrast, cirrus are our highest altitude clouds, and they are formed by tiny particles of ice. Most often appearing as delicate, thin and feathery streaks, cirrus clouds are also fair-weather clouds that do not produce precipitation. The word “cirrus” comes from the Latin word for “lock of hair”, and it is easy to see the resemblance! These high, wispy clouds may also cause several light-bending phenomena, such as sun dogs (spots of light appearing on either side of the sun), halos (a ring of light around either the sun or the moon), and sun pillars (a shaft of light appearing above the rising or setting sun).

There’s one type of cloud we can meet up close, and that is the ground-level version of the stratus cloud known as fog. The word “stratus” comes from the Latin word meaning “to spread out” or “to cover with a layer”. You know the type: the heavy overcast that makes you say “what a gloomy day!”, and want to put the teakettle on and curl up with a good book. Even lower in altitude than cumulus clouds, stratus are a dense, generally featureless type of cloud that seldom produces precipitation. But they can still get you wet if you choose to take a walk in a dense fog! 🍃





Flocking Together

Rain didn't dampen the spirit at the Dutchess Land Conservancy's Annual Fall Luncheon, which raised more than \$250,000 on October 13th for DLC programs. Nearly 400 attendees embraced the beauty of fall in the Hudson Valley at the breathtaking Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve with this year's site overlooking the serene Bontecou Lake. Co-chairs Florence Peyrelongue and Jose Guerra and Julia and David Descoteaux, joined by the luncheon committee, celebrated the opening of the Bontecou Preserve trails. Guests were welcomed with craft cocktails by the Fizzy Filly and able to peruse the silent auction while listening to the lively Red Barn Band before sitting down to a delightful lunch provided by Spice Catering. The afternoon was rounded out by an educational "Birds of Prey" exhibition, "Hawk Tales." 🍂





A Farm's Future

BY GEORGINA SCHAEFFER

In the town of Wappinger, Alex Reese and his wife Alison Spear are steadily stewarding the sixth-generation family-owned Obercreek Farm.

Rising out of a deep-rooted and meaningful legacy of conservation, Obercreek Farm's current day operations and land protection efforts reflect the intention of the Reese family to continue their responsible stewardship of the land. Alex Reese and Alison Spear made Obercreek their permanent home in 2006 and revived the farm operation in 2012. By partnering with young farmers, they began growing NOFA-NY (Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York) and USDA-certified organic fruits and vegetables, in addition to continuing leasing additional land to a local hay farmer. Soon, they set up a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation to distribute the produce to members, which is now also available online at obercreekfarm.com. The on-site Obercreek Farm Store sells fruits and vegetables grown on the farm, as well as a variety of produce from other local operations, and products including chutneys, pestos and pies. In 2017, Alex began Obercreek Brewery, selling beer on-site at their tasting room and on the brewery's website, obercreekbrewing.com. Solidifying the family's commitment to the land, the Reeses donated a conservation easement on 42 acres of the property in 2021, and this fall, the DLC was able to complete the preservation of an additional 143 acres of Obercreek Farm through the purchase of development rights, ensuring this vital urban farmland will remain viable for agriculture in perpetuity.

One of only a few agricultural properties still operating in the Town of Wappinger, its preservation helps maintain the agricultural heritage of Dutchess County.



"This is a particularly exciting project for us because the farm is in a more densely populated area," DLC President Becky Thornton explains. "We have an opportunity to conserve land in a neighborhood which may not have as many options for open space." In addition to its importance as an urban working farm, Obercreek contains a great deal of biological and geological diversity. Located in the Upper Hudson basin, the farm boasts a high level of plant and wildlife diversity across a landscape that contains agricultural and grassland habitats. Approximately 85 percent of the property (over 120-acres) is covered by fertile agricultural soils, that take hundreds of years to create. In addition, the farm is located along the eastern banks of the Wappinger Creek, just upstream of its confluence with the Hudson River, making Obercreek's preservation vital for safeguarding the quality of drinking water for more than 100,000 people.

"We owe a great deal to our partners and wish to thank the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for the funding provided through their Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program that helped make the preservation of the Obercreek Farm possible," Thornton continues. "We also owe thanks to Dutchess County, which provided additional funding through the Dutchess County Partnership for Manageable Growth. We would not have been able to preserve this urban farmland which shores up the Hudson Valley foodshed without them." 🌱



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Has protected more than 47,000 acres

Is in the top 5% of Land Trusts nationwide in terms of acres protected by conservation easements

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Each success we celebrate, each milestone we achieve is because of you! With the tremendous support from people like you—people who value our clean drinking water; open land for outdoor activities; intact forests that clean our air; wildlife habitat; our local farms that provide us with fresh food; and unparalleled scenic views. As we approach the end of the year, we hope you will consider making a gift to help us reach our next milestone of 50,000 acres protected.

Ways you can support the DLC:

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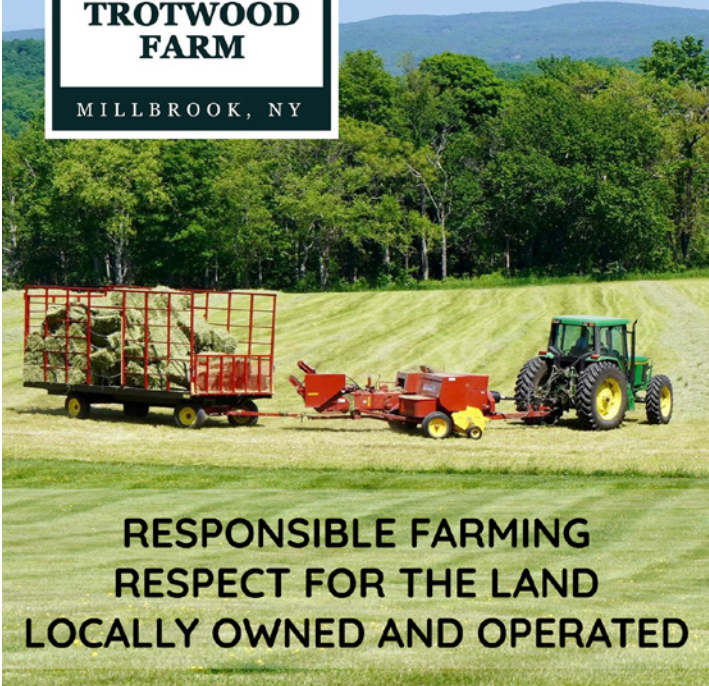
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