

E-News for June 2015

Federated Conservationists of Westchester, Inc. <fcwc@fcwc.org>

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Federated Conservationists of Westchester County

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Become a Member

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FCWC is an environmental coalition of individual and organizational members.

As an umbrella organization, we are well suited to foster the exchange of resources and ideas from local environmental groups and to channel their efforts to maximize our collective outreach.

We are so pleased because this issue of our E-News is particularly rich in our member organizations' accomplishments. We are proud of what they do.

May 2015

Our Mission and Vision

Our mission is to provide leadership that educates people about environmental issues, problems, and solutions; advocates sound decision making; and works with groups and individuals to protect Westchester's natural resources.

FCWC envisions a county in which an environmental ethic defines and shapes all public and private decisions affecting natural resources.

Groundwork Hudson Valley and Hilltop Hanover Farm: 2 Groups That Are Thinking Outside the Planting Bed

Westchester's Local Food

By Kate Munz, Membership Relations Coordinator

[Click to Read Article on FCWC's Blog](#)

There is more to Westchester's local agricultural community than the everyday farmers market-goer may think. While traditionally what comes to mind when thinking of farming are weekly roadside stands and idyllic pastureland, two of FCWC's member organizations are handling more subtle applications and trends associated with local food production. Explore how Groundwork Hudson Valley and Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center are working outside of box this growing season.

pH Balances, Vegetables, and Fish

If you would like to learn more,
please visit
www.fcwc.org/membership

50th Anniversary Gala

Save the Date
September 26, 2015

Honoring
Pace Law School
Bedford 2020
Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig

Donations in Memory

Unfortunately we've recently lost two members of our FCWC family, former FCWC president Warren Ross of Rye, and husband of long time board member Nortrud Spero, Monroe Spero. Mr. Spero designated FCWC as the non-profit to which any donations in his memory can be made.

[Give in Memory](#)

Featured Member Organization

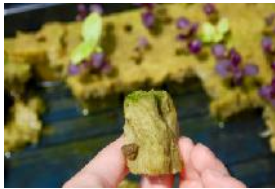
Westmoreland Sanctuary

Westmoreland Sanctuary, located on Chestnut Ridge Road in Mount Kisco, offers 640 acres of wooded countryside with 7.5 miles of trails perfect for exploring, and a museum with deep Westchester County roots.

Established in 1957 as a nonprofit, Westmoreland aims to increase public engagement with nature through its three principles of conservation, education, and recreation - something they have been able to achieve through impressive progressive projects.

Groundwork Hudson Valley

Located in Yonkers and along the waterfront, Groundwork Hudson Valley has been pioneering a project for the last seven years that combines all of the elements of sustainable agriculture: green techniques, economics, and community. Their [Science Barge](#) is a floating, off-the-grid system that uses aquaponics to grow vegetables for Groundwork's weekly summer farmers market. As an educational facility the barge teaches the public about benefits of urban agriculture, green energy, and most notably aquaponic agriculture - a practice that combines aquaculture (raising fish and other water animals) with hydroponics (cultivating plants in water).



The barge has two green houses on board, where volunteers tend to lettuce, tomatoes, and the koi fish swimming beneath the growing plants. All water used in their aquaponics system is derived from rainwater, and in cases where there are drought conditions the barge uses a reverse-osmosis system to process water from the Hudson River, which is brackish.

When visiting the barge, the whizzing sound of small wind turbines fill the air with each passing breeze and the two solar voltaic panels move shadows along the deck as they tilt slightly to catch rays. It is a great place for children and adults alike to get hands on experience with this alternative form of agriculture and energy. You can peer in at all the pH labels on tanks and even get to hold some of the "rock wool" that the plants are grown in.

Part of what makes the Science Barge an important feature of Westchester's local agricultural system is its focus on bringing locally sourced food to urban locations. Groundwork Hudson Valley has focused on the more urban locations in the county in an effort spur green growth in these communities, like Yonkers. The group has not stopped at the Science Barge, but also has many [community gardens](#) dispersed through the city.

Groundwork Hudson Valley's work is truly impressive and not to mention really fun. To see when their next farmers market will be, scroll down to read our Upcoming Events.

Also visit www.groundworkhv.org to learn more about their efforts.

The Revival of the Farmer Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center

Off Hanover Street by Route 100, Hilltop Hanover Farm and Educational Center is situated just outside Yorktown's





Although the organization itself is less than 60 years old, the history of Westmoreland Sanctuary dates back to the 1700s, where the museum began as a church on a hill overlooking Route 22. Built shortly after the Revolution, the church served as a meeting center for the town until 1897 - a fitting background for a place that would later bring together its community in the appreciation of nature. In the 1950s the structure was taken down and stored, and later reassembled in Westmoreland's property in 1973 and turned into the nature museum.

Today in its conservation efforts, Westmoreland is in the process of raising funds for a new Terrace Garden and [Game Cameras](#). The cameras are to be set up around the preserve, and will be an effective tool for staff, interns, and volunteers to better study wildlife conservation. Westmoreland has also partnered in a citizen science project called [Wild Suburbia](#), a crowd sourcing effort to track bobcat, bear, coyote, fisher, and fox populations.



As an educational facility, the sanctuary provides public programming with a hands-on educational nature experience to more than 30,000 visitors annually. But unlike most nature centers, Westmoreland has also uniquely

center. A county-owned vegetable farm, Hilltop Hanover has been teaching the public about sustainable crop production since 2011. With a history dating back to the 1600s, it is fitting that here there is an effort to develop the next generation of farmers.



Farming as a livelihood has decreased drastically since the 1900s due to increased industrialization, but we are finding that we need our farmers once again. A growing trend all throughout the country, and strongly here in Westchester County, has been an increased demand for locally grown food.



When speaking with Hilltop Hanover's head farmer Max Zanke about this trend, he attributes it to the public being alerted to sustainability and localism issues, and generally caring more about their diets. The result has been a renewed interest in farms and organically grown food.



Hilltop Hanover has been a good model for developing the next generation of farmers. While its focus is on [public education](#) of sound farming techniques, it is also a working farm. Hilltop Hanover feeds close to 150 families through its [CSA program](#), and even more at their [weekly farm stand](#) and in donations to local food pantries. This need for skilled farm workers has allowed for individuals to fill this niche.



In conversations with Max again, this revival of the farmer begins to feel circular. Many of the residential land in Westchester used to be farmland; but in recent history's unprofitably of small-scale farming, family farms were abandoned and the land was developed. Today there are efforts to bring back these farms and new generations are filling the void of their stewards.

Photo Credit: Hilltop Hanover's instagram account @hilltophanoverfarm, Helen Brady

"It's true the way we see farmers we see now has changed. Our parents and grandparents grew up trying to move away from family farms, because of the poverty and drudgery often associated with the work. This new generation was simply filling the void left by that migration. I hate to use such obvious language but it seemed more "grassroots" and "organic".

There is a lot at play behind the increasing trend for local food; there could be touches of sentimentality for a simpler way, but there is also the recognition that industrialization of farming may have gone a step too far. Agriculture is deeply embedded in our country's roots and the loss of small farming threatens generations of knowledge to be forgotten.

Hilltop Hanover and its farmers have been a part of this effort to reignite the relationship the community as with its food. Their work is hard, but is surely a labor of love.

integrated arts into their environmental education with the [Theater in the Sanctuary](#) program. Currently being featured is the musical "Into the Woods, Jr.", where actors and the audience enjoy a theatrical experience while immersed in a natural setting.

And still Westmoreland Sanctuary remains at heart a recreation space for the public. Individuals and families are invited to come by and enjoy the [hiking trails, lake, and grounds](#). See you soon!

260 Chestnut Ridge Road
Mount Kisco, NY 10549
([Directions](#))

(914) 666-8448
www.westmorelandsanctuary.org

This section will feature a different FCWC Member Organization each month. Highlighting general information, we hope to spread the word about some of these amazing organizations.

If you are a part of an organization interested in becoming a member of Federated Conservationists, visit www.fcwc.org/#!/member-organization-form/ccj2

Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Honors FCWC Board Member

At the annual meeting of the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon (BRSSA) Chapter last week, the group recognized long time FCWC Board member, and former Executive Director, Carolyn Cunningham, for her lifetime environmental efforts. Her volunteer activities for Westchester through FCWC began in 1978. In addition to her volunteer activities for FCWC, Carolyn was recognized for her years on the statewide Environmental Advocates Board and her years on the City of Rye Conservation Commission in the

Come and meet the Hilltop crew every weekend at their farmer stand, and even get a chance to take your turn in the field on their U-Pick Saturdays.

Also visit www.hilltophanoverfarm.org to learn more about their efforts.

[Click to Read Article on FCWC Blog](#)

Greening Our Parks

Conservation Café Series

By Alicia Molloy, FCWC Program Director

On Friday May 29, FCWC and our partners in the "Conservation Café" presented the latest Conversations on Conservation program entitled "[Greening our Parks](#)."

Many parks and open spaces are increasingly looking at how they can advance their missions through sustainable operations on their lands. These can include but are not limited to alternative energy projects, waste reduction initiatives, and pollution prevention projects. By many accounts, our parks and open spaces are leaders in sustainability, yet many of these projects remain secondary attractions to the natural resources that we seek out when visiting these locations. The Conservation Café sought to highlight some regional sustainability initiatives taken by parks in our own backyards.

Alyssa Cobb, the Assistant Commissioner for Parklands and Planning for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation discussed the New York City Community Parks Initiative (CPI). The CPI is an investment in the smaller public parks that are located in New York City's densely populated and growing neighborhoods where there are higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. The Initiative will engage New Yorkers in rebuilding local parks and reconnect communities to the green spaces right outside their doorsteps. 'Greening' is a targeted improvement that the NYC Parks and Recreation Department is looking to incorporate into the CPI. Cobb also noted that stormwater management was a big concern when updating some of the City parks that include significant amounts of impervious surfaces...

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Wrap-up of FCWC's 50th Annual Meeting

A Year-Long Celebration

On June 3rd, 2015 friends and members of Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (FCWC) gathered at the Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary in Rye to take part in FCWC's Annual Meeting to honor its past and present leaders. As a part of the year-long celebration of FCWC's 50th Anniversary the Annual Meeting was a chance to say thank you to the individuals who dedicated so much time, energy, and knowledge to this organization.

1970s and again for the last three years (and currently) as its chair, and for several terms on the Planning Commission, the Rye board that makes wetlands determinations.

The current president of BRSSA is Sandy Morrissey, an individual member of FCWC and a skilled computer person, who helped straighten out the FCWC office in the 1990s. She is known to many in the county for her blue bird house project which has been amazingly successful. BRSSA is one of the larger Audubon Chapters in Westchester, known years ago as Scarsdale Audubon, it now includes in its title the many municipalities it serves in the southern part of the county.

[On hand to present proclamations were NYS Senator George Latimer, Assemblyman Steve Otis, Supervisor of the Town of Mamaroneck Nancy Seligson, a representative of NYS Audubon to present a joint certificate from the State and BRSSA, one from Congresswoman Nita Lowey and Westchester County Legislator Catherine Parker.]

FCWC thanks BRSSA for this recognition.



See more pictures from the Annual Meeting when you visit our [Facebook](#)

Under a breezy tent and along the shore, the event began with words from FCWC's Co-Presidents Jason Klein and Carole Griffiths. Both spoke of the legacy that FCWC has created over the last five decades and our efforts to continue it.

The evening was made even more special by the attendance of Kevin Plunkett of the County Executive's office, Assemblyman Steve Otis, State Senator George Latimer, and Legislator Catherine Parker from the Westchester County Board of Legislatures. The officials present delivered moving proclamations for FCWC and the Edith G. Read Student Award recipient, Katie Yacoub. We are so thankful for the kind words that were spoken.

Guests enjoyed a picnic supper and opportunity to explore the Sanctuary. All past presidents and executive directors who were present were presented with the Green Seal Award, and all former Board members who were present were recognized. Katie Yacoub, a Cadette Girl Scout from Eastchester, received our Edith G. Read Student Award in recognition of her efforts to ban plastic shopping bags in Eastchester.

Then after a short business meeting, the Class of 2018 Board members were re-elected and included: Jan Blaire, Robert Carroll, Steven J. Levy, Sharon Pickett, Chris Reilly, and Rick Turner.

Once again thank you to all who came to our Annual Meeting, it was such a pleasure to see so many familiar faces. Now on to the gala!

Member Discount on Clearwater Festival

FCWC Members!

You are eligible for our group discount on Clearwater Festival tickets.

At the online check-out for festival, type the promo code **CONSERVATION** to receive the discount.

A Look Into Our Past

Westchester Environment Revisited

This is the sixth installment of our "A Look into Our Past" Series, honoring the past five decades of environmental work in Westchester County. This series revisits some of our best accomplishments by featuring past articles from our original publication "Westchester Environment." To see all of the other past articles visit our blog at www.fcwc.wordpress.com/?s=A+Look+Into+Our+Past

In this post we would like to highlight the importance of farmland in Westchester County, as per our theme for this month's E-News. This article, written by Gudrun "Goodie" LeLash our then Executive Director, cites the need to preserve a local farm on the Cortlandt/Yorktown border called



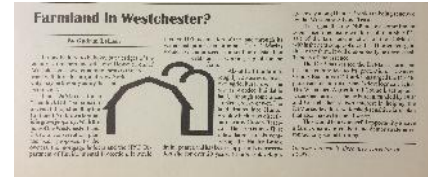
Photo Credit: Clearwater.org, Augustos Menezes

Hemlock Hill Farm and owned by the DeMaria family. The call to action was a success and today Hemlock Hill Farm is able to provide its community with farm-fresh products. Visit their website at www.hemlockhillfarm.com.

(Excerpts from "Westchester Environment" - Vol. 96 No. 2 - March & April 1996)

Farmland in Westchester?

By Gudrun "Goodie" LeLash,
FCWC Executive Director 1996



It may be hard to believe, but vestiges of the county's rural heritage still exist. However, one of Westchester's few remaining farms is threatened with foreclosure, and New York City may be the only entity that can preserve it.

The DeMaria Farm, "Hemlock Hill," situated on a scenic hilltop straddling the Cortlandt/Yorktown border, is in grave jeopardy. With the help of Westchester Land Trust a conservation plan has been proposed to the owners, the mortgage holders and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. It would involve DEP acquisition of the land through its watershed protection program. The DeMarias would use the proceeds for settling outstanding debts and as working capital for the farm.

About half the farm's roughly 120 acres is in active agricultural use. The rest is wooded buildable land, although some areas are steep, rocky or wet. The land drains into Hunter Brook which runs directly into nearby Croton Reservoir. The farm is one of just a few large parcels comprising the Hunter Brook drainage area and has been a top property conservation site for over 20 years. Efforts to develop a greenway along Hunter Brook are being renewed by the Westchester Land Trust...

[Click to Read More](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

For a full list of our member organization's events and happenings, check out our Federation Calendar at www.fcwc.org/calendar. Remember to always confirm events before attending. Check back regularly as we are always updating.

Personal Ecology by Fred First

Sponsored by:

Friends of Trailside Nature Museum

When: Saturday, June 13, 7:30 PM

Where: Ward Pound Ridge, Route 35 and 121, Cross River, NY

Join author Fred First in a talk regarding our Personal Ecology, a concept regarding our evolving responsibilities to nature, place, and community. Fred has published two books: Slow Road Home; and What We Hold in our Hands. Visit Friends of Trailside Nature Museum [Event Page](#) to learn more.

3rd Annual Farm to Table Dinner and Wine Tasting

Sponsored by: Greenburgh Nature Center

When: Sunday, June 14, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

Where: Greenburgh Nature Center, 99 Dromore Road, Scarsdale, NY

Enjoy delicious samplings from a variety of Hudson Valley restaurants (including Cafe of Love, Ladle of Love, and Village Social), bakeries, and wineries (including Vintology Wine & Spirits and Whitecliff Vineyard & Winery) while supporting locally grown products.

Enjoy a separate interactive culinary and learning experience held at the GNC, hosted in part by Whole Foods Market Westchester and their healthy-eating specialists, along with talented GNC staff. Visit GNC's [Event Page](#) to learn more.

"Get Fresh Yonkers" Farmers Market

Sponsored by: Groundwork Hudson Valley

When: Friday, June 19, 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Where: Van der Donck Park, across the street from the Yonkers Train Station and adjacent to the Yonkers Riverfront Library

Groundwork opened the Farmers Market in 2010, bringing local, affordable produce to Yonkers each week. The market is part of Groundwork's Get Fresh Yonkers initiative to create a food co-op for Yonkers in collaboration with area farms, local schools, and downtown businesses. Learn more by visiting groundworkhv.org.

Preserving the Harvest: Jams & Jellies

Co-Sponsored by: Friends of Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center

When: Saturday, June 20 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Where: Hilltop Hanover Farm, 1271 Hanover Street, Yorktown-Heights, NY

One of the pleasures of a heavy summer harvest is being able to preserving produce for the winter. In this session come learn how to make jams & jelly making where you'll learn how to take your favorite summer fruits and turn them into a tasty treat that you can enjoy all year long. [Click to register](#).

Clearwater Festival

Sponsored by: Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.

When: Saturday, June 20 to Sunday, June 21

Where: Croton Point Park

Clearwater's Great Hudson River Revival (aka "the Clearwater Festival" or "Revival") features seven sustainably powered stages with diverse music, dance, storytelling and family-oriented programming and more. - See more at: clearwaterfestival.org

***FCWC is offering a [group discount](#) on festival tickets for FCWC members. Type promo code **CONSERVATION** at the online check-out to receive the discount.**

Hike the Waterfall Trail

Sponsored by: Teatown Lake Reservation

When: Sunday, June 21, 7:30 PM

Where: Teatown Lake Reservation, 1600 Spring Valley Road, Ossining, NY

Start the summer off with an invigorating hike along the Waterfall Trail. No children under 8. Members Free, Non-members \$7. All Welcome. Programs require pre-registration. To register, call [914-762-2912 x 110](tel:914-762-2912)

Father's Day Fishing Derby

Sponsored by: Westmoreland Sanctuary

When: Sunday, June 21, 2015 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Where: Westmoreland Sanctuary, 260 Chestnut Ridge Road, Mount Kisco, NY

Come on out with your dad and enjoy this special event as we suspend our "No fishing" policy. This event is for children ages 5-12 years old. Parents must accompany their children. Each participant must provide their own fishing equipment, bait, etc. This event is limited to 15 children. More details will be provided upon registration. Free for members and \$5 for non-members.

*Pre-register by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 19th to srickler@westmorelandsanctuary.org

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For the last 50 years Federated Conservationists of Westchester County has been here to bring Westchester's environmental community to you. We want to continue that legacy by becoming an easy-to-use online resource. Let us help you stay informed.

Join us and the conversation online today!

We hope you find the information contained within this E-News relevant and useful. As always, please keep in touch and let us know your thoughts and ideas regarding environmental issues throughout the County.

Sincerely,

Federated Conservationists of Westchester County

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