

VIEWPOINTS

**A Walk Down Wolf Hollow Road
Room to Roam: Conservation Corridors
Next Steps at Bender Melon Farm Preserve
Welcome to David's Trail**



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LAND CONSERVANCY**

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From the Executive Director

Mark King, *Executive Director*

A recent article in the *Honest Weight Coop Scoop* newsletter referred to MHLC's "small but mighty staff"—a very apt description. Leafing through this edition of *Viewpoints*, it is quite apparent that our small team at MHLC is very busy and working hard to preserve open spaces in the Capital Region. From Nature Buses and gnomes homes to the Helderbergs and the Mohawk Valley, our impact is significant—and your support made it possible!

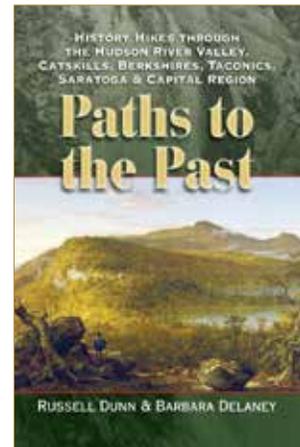
Next year is MHLC's 30th year of operation. Nearly 13,000 acres later, we are working harder than ever to preserve the places that make this area so unique. In honor of our upcoming 30th anniversary, we are rolling out a \$30,000 fundraising challenge generously supported by two families dedicated to conservation: the Miller family, in remembrance of their father Ed Miller, and the Love family. Through this matching challenge, every dollar donated by Dec. 31, 2021, will be matched up to \$30,000. As another incentive to give, we are also raffling a beautiful oil painting that artist Laura Shore of Altamont generously donated. Laura's outstanding landscape paintings are genuinely moving and capture the spirit of the region we are working to protect.

As we approach the holiday season, consider a gift in support of MHLC. It is a climate-friendly approach to giving with a lasting impact. You could even accompany it with a copy of Barbara Delaney and Russell Dunn's new book *Paths to the Past*. I am honored to have been asked to write an introduction. The book provides wonderful insights into our fascinating history and is another incentive to explore the region. Our Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary is included among a great selection of hikes and walks. Guides like this help us understand places and nature that might otherwise go unnoticed and provide a deeper appreciation how we experience a place. It is this quest for knowledge about communities and landscapes

that encourages the drive to preserve our natural world and ultimately influences the decisions we make about the future of these lands. I would also recommend the many other titles by Black Dome Press, which are a great source of local history and exploration guides for our region.

In closing, I want to thank all the Bender Melon Farm Preserve supporters, especially the 350+ respondents to our story map who participated in our survey and follow-up webinar. (Read more about this on page 6.) We look forward to big strides at Bender in the coming year, but in the meantime, we invite you to visit the David Iselin trail, the first public access on the property. This beautiful trail is accessible from the Hilton Park on 85A and will soon connect to the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail—a sample of great things to come.

Have a very happy holiday season, and keep exploring!



A Closer Look at **Wolf Hollow Road**

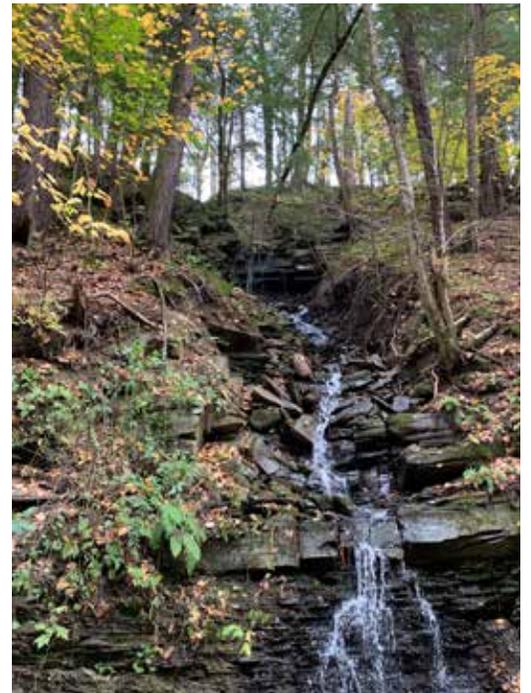
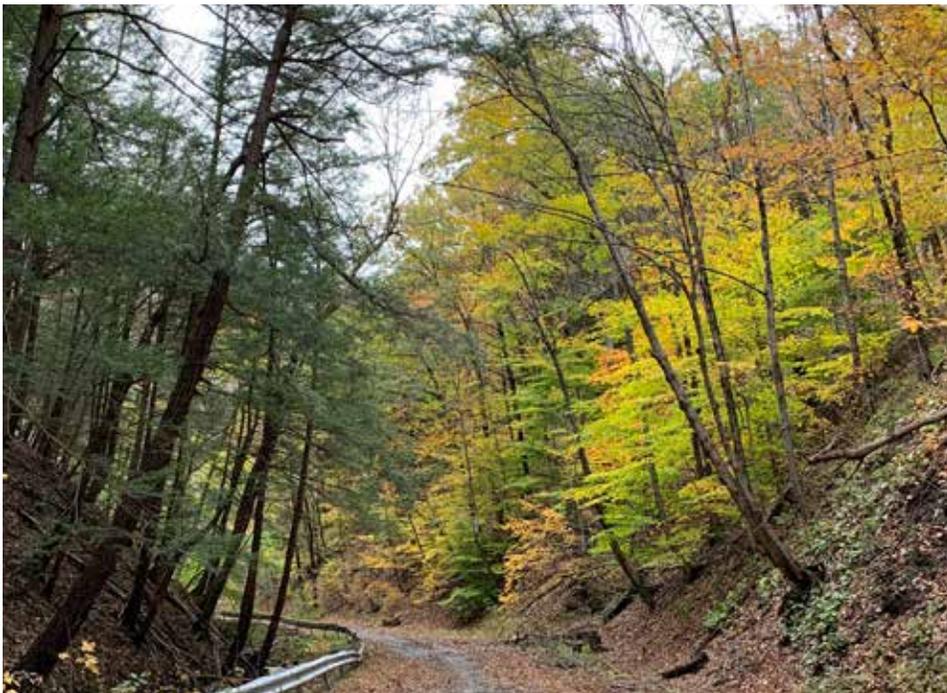
Located in the hills of the Town of Glenville in Schenectady County, Wolf Hollow Road has been a significant pathway for hundreds of years. The 1.3-mile asphalt paved road runs through a ravine created by glacial movement in the area and sits directly on Hoffman's Fault. Land to the west of the fault is higher than the east, exposing rock that is thousands of years old. This offset ranges from 650 to 1,200 feet and results in different geology on either side of the fault. The noted variations in botanical species between the east and west side is most likely due to the difference in exposed rock layers. The steep wooded slopes flanking Wolf Hollow Road feature dramatic rock formations and many small waterfalls that spring to life with rainfall or snowmelt. The Chaughtanoonda Creek runs along the winding road before feeding into the Mohawk River. The area is considered a landscape of resiliency due to its topography and is a corridor well-traveled by wildlife. The interesting geology and unique habitat for flora and fauna make the ravine a prime destination for scientists, educators, and students.

The ravine's elevated walls served as a promontory—one of the first landmarks seen as Indigenous People and early settlers traveled north for trapping or south to the Mohawk River. As a popular navigation way, this small ravine was also the site of many fierce battles. In 1669, Mohawk Indians fought a group of Algonquins in a multiday battle on Wolf Hollow Road; a historical marker recognizes this significant battle.

After sustaining damage from Tropical Storms Irene and Lee in 2011, the paved roadway was deemed unsafe and was closed to vehicular traffic. The fragile nature of the ravine is evident. Areas where the soil has washed away expose tree roots that cling to the shale ledges above the road and a twisted guard rail perches on the crumbling asphalt edge along the creek. In 2020, MHLC purchased a five-acre parcel along Wolf Hollow Road to protect this unique and historic navigation way.

Currently, MHLC is working with Schenectady County, neighbors, and other partners to open the location for pedestrian use so the public can safely enjoy the rich history and geology of the treasured space. Plans for a parking area will be the next step in creating access to Wolf Hollow Road. We recently hosted a guided walk of the road led by Executive Director Mark King and Union College's Professor George Shaw. Participants also enjoyed a complimentary beer after the walk courtesy of Wolf Hollow Brewing. Registration reached capacity within days, so we hope to offer additional opportunities to visit Wolf Hollow Road on our 2022 Events Calendar!

Front cover photo: *Catskill Sunrise* by Robert Stone. This view is from Bolotsky's Field, a property protected by MHLC with a conservation easement. The photos on this page and the opposite page were taken in late October 2021 during a staff trip to Wolf Hollow Road.



Room to Roam

Helderberg Conservation Corridor Complete!

Passionate about helping wildlife, Marilyn and Norm Fancher made a generous donation earlier this year enabling MHLC to purchase 40 acres of land at the base of the Helderberg Escarpment. The land, comprised of three separate parcels previously owned by the Village of Voorheesville, will remain undisturbed and with limited public access. While touring the property with Executive Director Mark King this fall, Marilyn gently scooped up a pair of small salamanders from their hiding spot under a rock. Delighted by her find, Marilyn explained, "This piece of land is significant to so many amphibians and plants, and it serves as an important watershed." As she carefully returned the creatures back to their creekside dwelling, Marilyn added, "I am happy to be able to protect this land that will provide safe passageways for wildlife living below the escarpment."



Mark King and Marilyn Fancher tour the property purchased from the Village of Voorheesville thanks to the Fanchers' donation.

This new 40-acre acquisition and the recent protection of the neighboring 237-acre Heldeberg Workshop property with a conservation easement mark the completion of the Helderberg Conservation Corridor. In the pursuit of preserving the iconic viewsheds and providing crucial open space for wildlife, protecting these undeveloped lands below Thacher Park has been a decades-long goal for MHLC. Over the years, the Conservancy has worked with landowners, community members, and partners to create a protected corridor of nearly 3,700 acres spanning from Thacher Park across Indian Ladder Farms to the Black Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area. The corridor allows wildlife room to roam, adjusting and expanding their territory as the effects of climate change and development continue to press upon them.

Safe Routes for Wildlife:

Connecting the Catskills to the Adirondacks

This past year, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy was awarded a grant through the Department of Environmental Conservation's Mohawk Watershed Program. The grant supports a larger partnership with The Nature Conservancy to develop the Catskill to Adirondack Corridor.

Connecting the Catskills to the Adirondacks is not a new concept—MHLC has been working on this idea in the background over the last three years. In 2019, MHLC staff attended the Staying Connected Initiative's (SCI) annual partner retreat and collaborated with partners, including The Nature Conservancy (TNC), to make a case for acknowledging the space between the Catskills and the Adirondacks as a recognized linkage. The recognition of this linkage was the first step in gaining grant support to develop the conservation corridor and the larger support needed to study the area and its impact on MHLC's conservation work.

These two conservation projects were featured in videos presented at our annual fall fundraiser. Watch them on our YouTube channel to learn more:

<https://tinyurl.com/5an5huv2>



With the Catskill to Adirondack linkage now officially recognized by the SCI, The Nature Conservancy suggested the Mohawk Watershed grant be used as a way to learn more by gathering data on the ground. With TNC's help, a successful application was awarded, funding an extensive data collection and mapping initiative to address wildlife crossings within the corridor. Initial mapping through TNC's Resilient and Connected Lands mapping tool showed two possible pinch points within the north-south corridor. Pinch points are areas where wildlife movement occurs but is surrounded on either side by limitations to this movement. These limitations generally include human disturbances such as roads and development.

This past summer, TNC hired two technicians who analyzed each road crossing at these pinch point locations in Canajoharie and Glenville Hill. The technicians used the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative protocol to assess crossings under Route 5, Route 5S, the NYS Thruway, and Route 88 to determine whether these crossings were permeable by fish and wildlife. The partners will compile the collected data into a larger mapping initiative to evaluate permeability through the whole linkage and create a conservation prioritization plan to ensure wildlife movement.

Why is this work important? We know that as the climate changes wildlife will need space to move with it. Through this work, MHLC will create a connectivity plan that will help prioritize our land protection to support this initiative. This plan will also benefit local municipal planning efforts to create a balanced landscape for humans and wildlife as we progress into the future.

This project would not be possible without funding through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Mohawk Watershed grant program.

Scan the QR codes below to watch the videos!

Catskills to Adirondacks ►

◀ Helderberg Conservation Corridor



Photos, top to bottom: Our partners at TNC installed cameras at the pinch points to capture wildlife activity in the culverts beneath the roadway. | This culvert camera image shows a family of raccoons safely passing under the road. | In this image, a fisher is carrying its dinner—a hearty skunk.

(Photos courtesy of The Nature Conservancy New York.)

Building a Community Asset at **Bender Melon Farm Preserve**

Since the acquisition of the Bender Melon Farm in the fall of 2020, MHLC has been working to develop a vision for the property's future. The Bender Melon Farm Preserve Committee, a small committee of board members, community planners, and environmental consultants, was created to help gather public input on the next steps for the property.

The Committee formed a Story Map, a tool to provide visual and written materials to show potential uses for sections of the property. The Story Map was launched this past summer and included a survey at the end to gather public input on where to go next with this important conservation property.

More than 350 people responded to the survey, providing valuable feedback, including opinions on whether MHLC should allow public access to the property and whether grazing animals or habitat restoration should be a part of the property's future. The input received was incredibly helpful and has formed the vision for Bender Melon Farm Preserve.

On November 4th, MHLC hosted a webinar to review the survey results and show how the public has shaped the future of this property. Overall, survey results showed support for public access and recreational opportunities. Additionally, there was interest in keeping the open fields and adding pollinator habitat and wildlife habitat for important species such as amphibians and grassland birds. MHLC is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to explore options for these initiatives on the property.

An important next step for the property includes clean-up of the fallen down structures. MHLC will use revenue generated from the sale of the 20-acre portion of the property to complete this important clean-up project to ensure public and environmental safety on the property. MHLC is also exploring possible funding sources to add additional trails and refurbish the existing bridge that connects the southern and northern portions of the property into one large community asset.

If you missed the public webinar, you can watch the recorded session on our YouTube page to learn about the survey results and hear details about our next steps for the property. Visit the Bender Melon Farm web page for a link to the video: www.mohawkhudson.org/our-preserves/BenderMelonFarm.

Photo: Aerial view of Bender Melon Farm Preserve looking west towards the Heldeberg Escarpment. If you look closely, you'll see a break in the treeline to the right that runs diagonally from the corner of the page upwards—this is the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail.



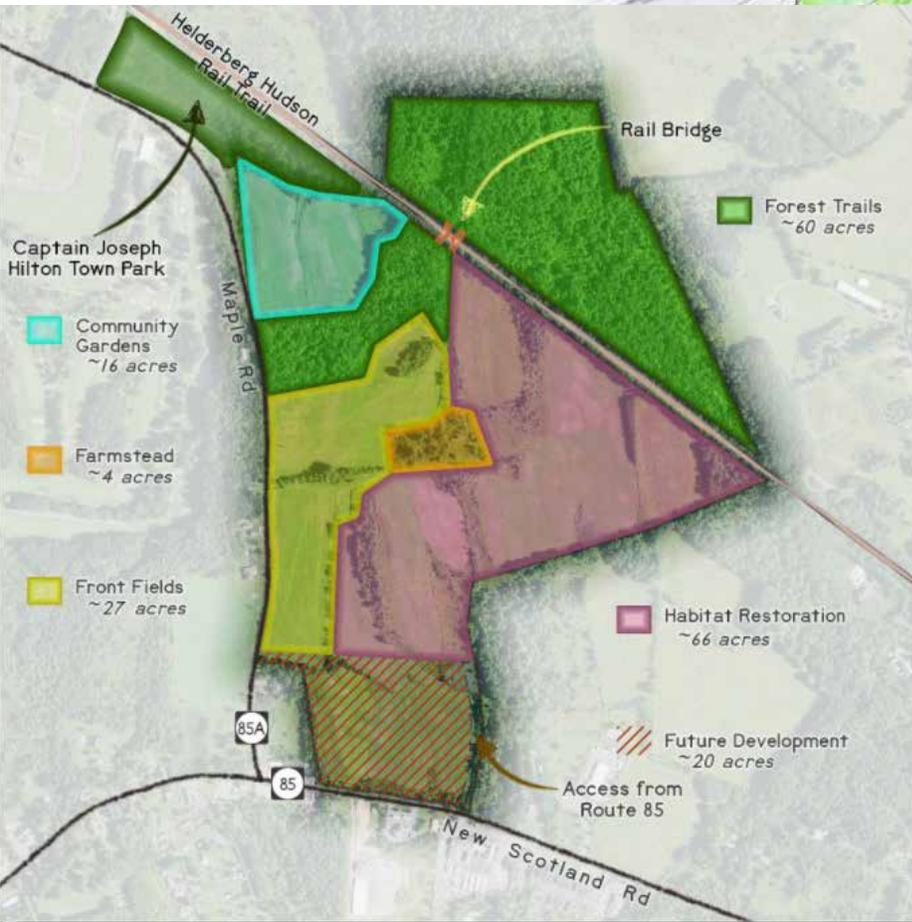
MHLC is grateful for the public's involvement and valuable input provided for this project. We look forward to rolling out the next phase of Bender Melon Farm Preserve.

Thank you!

Map illustrating potential land use



Concept sketch for bridge renovation



Bender Melon Farm officially became MHLC's 22nd preserve with the opening of David's Trail in October 2021. Read more about David's Trail on page 9.

Concept sketch for community gardens



What's next?

You can follow our progress on the MHLC website:

www.mohawkhudson.org/our-preserves/BenderMelonFarm/

WINTER WITH MHLC

Don't let dropping temps slow you down—bundle up and get outside this winter! Open all year long, our preserves have so much to offer this time of year.

After fall color peaks, you can look forward to the new viewscapes that are revealed. And there's nothing quite like a landscape blanketed in glimmering snow. Whether you take a leisurely stroll or an invigorating hike, spending time outdoors will surely boost your energy and mood.

Many of the MHLC preserves have trails well suited for XC skiing and snowshoeing. Read our guide to winter sports by Stewardship Assistant Bob Frederick. Bob's guide has very specific information on which preserves and trails are best for your particular skill level. He also hosts winter meet-ups throughout the season at various preserves; join the "Trail Breakers" email list for notifications on group outings!

Learn more at
www.mohawkudson.org/xc-ski-preserves/

Here are a few tips when heading out this winter:

- Dress in moisture wicking layers to keep warm.
- Pack water and snacks—a thermos with a hot drink is the perfect reward after a cold trek.
- Protect yourself from the glare of UV rays with sunglasses and sunscreen.
- Wear micro spikes and bring poles or a walking stick to help traverse icy trail sections.
- Travel with a friend or let someone know your location and how long you intend to be out.
- Plan ahead! Be sure to know your route, watch the weather forecast, and check current trail conditions at www.mohawkudson.org/trail-conditions.

Stay connected to MHLC!



Meet Our Newest Staff Member

Welcome, Tara Tornello!

Tara joined MHLC in September as the Development & Community Engagement Director. She holds a BA in English from Mount Saint Mary College and brings with her eighteen years of experience in marketing, fundraising, event planning, and project management. With a passion for environmental conservation, Tara looks forward to advancing the mission of the organization and building meaningful relationships within the community. In addition to serving as a volunteer Preserve Steward for the Keleher Preserve, she enjoys hiking, fly fishing, cooking, baking, and photography.



Tara Tornello

Thank you, Marcy and Kent!

Marcy Stryker joined the Conservancy in March of 2020 as our Director of Development. Her fundraising experience and coordination of our first ever virtual fall fundraiser were key to MHLC's success during the pandemic. We wish her well in her new endeavors with The Daughters of Sarah Community for Seniors.

Kent Harlow has been an integral part of the organization since he joined MHLC in May of 2019 as the Stewardship Coordinator. He has implemented dozens of workdays to maintain and improve our trails and to prepare 3 new preserves for public openings. Kent's fun-loving spirit and enthusiasm helped establish strong bonds with MHLC's preserve stewards, trail team volunteers, and conservation easement holders. Kent will take his talents to Rhinebeck, New York as the Operations Assistant at Camp Rising Sun.

Photo in background by Tom Bessette.

Getting Outside Together

At the Preserves

Throughout 2021, we hosted 18 events—the perfect chance to gather with people who share a love for nature and explore the MHLC Preserves. Our highest attended event was the Summer Hike-a-thon Scavenger Hunt where 384 people registered for clues to find adorable handcrafted gnome homes at each preserve and submitted photos to our Facebook gallery. Some of the photos included "color-your-own gnomes" (an activity from our website) posed in front of the homes. We look forward to bringing this new tradition back next summer, and we think you'll be excited to hear that plans are underway with the ART committee for a similar activity on the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail.

On the Rail Trail

The Rail Trail came alive on Saturday, October 2nd as community members created color chalk creations along the path during Art on the Rail Trail's 4th Annual Chalk the Walk. The artwork was posted to social media where people could vote for their favorites. Prizes from local business were awarded to the top three artists from both the 13 yrs. & older and 12 yrs. & under categories. The afternoon's festivities included an Art Talk with art historian Charles Duncan to discuss Andrea Hersh's mural at the Adams St. intersection. Visitors to the trail also had the opportunity to see the new murals created by artist Tyler Hall from Oh My! Murals. The "Share the Trail" project was funded by Albany County in an effort to make the trail safer for all users.

A Ride on the Nature Bus

For sixteen weeks, the free Nature Bus service connected Albany's communities to outdoor spaces just outside the city limits. By its last run on September 25, the bus had reached nearly 1,000 people—that's an average ridership of about 60 people each weekend. MHLC was thrilled to see the service reach this level of success in the first year, and we are working with program partners over the winter months to assess how Nature Bus and other offerings can make nature equitable for all.

This program could not have happened without the support of the Capital District Transportation Authority, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Friends of Five Rivers and MVP Health.

Special thanks to our program partners Friends of Tivoli Land Preserve and Farm, Pine Hollow Arboretum, DEC's Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, NYS's John Boyd Thacher State Park, Albany County Lawson Lake County Park and Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail.

Coming Soon:

The 2022 Events Calendar at www.mohawkhudson.org/Events

Photos: Gnome home found at Wolf Creek Falls! | Chalk art by Kelly Ann Raver takes 1st place. | ART committee members joined by Albany County Executive Dan McCoy and County Legislator Bill Reinhardt, gather for the unveiling of the "Share the Trail" murals. | Partners pose in front of the Nature Bus at a press event to launch the new service.



In the Spirit of Giving: David's Trail at Bender Melon Farm Preserve

On the morning of October 9, under a bright autumn sky and canopy of fall foliage, friends, family, and fellow supporters gathered at the Bender Melon Farm Preserve for the dedication and opening of David's Trail, the first nature trail at Bender Melon Farm Preserve. The creation of David's Trail was supported by Harold and Lauren Iselin in memory of their son David F. Iselin. The heartfelt memorial ceremony was followed by the official public opening of David's Trail, where the Iselin family, supporters, MHLC staff, and volunteers set stride on the new trail.

Through our partnership with the Iselin family, we learned more about David's special connection with nature and how he touched the lives of so many. "We appreciate the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy naming a trail in memory of our beloved David. He loved the outdoors, and this is a fitting way to remember the impact he had on all of our lives. We hope the trail and its beautiful vistas will bring joy to our community," the Iselin family shared.



Clockwise from top left: The Iselin Family; David's Trail weaves through the property's woodlands; and a view of the Bender Melon Farm fields from the trail.

David's Trail is a 0.57 mile loop over easy terrain through lovely woodlands with excellent views of the surrounding open fields and the Helderberg Escarpment in the distance. The trail offers visitors the first opportunity to get out on the land since MHLC's purchase of Bender Melon Farm last fall. David's Trail is accessible from the Town of New Scotland's nature trails, which begin at the Hilton Barn parking area off Hilton Road. Future plans for Bender Melon Farm Preserve include a connector between David's Trail and the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, community gardens, agricultural use, habitat restoration, and additional forested trails.

Habitat restoration is among the top priorities for the land as MHLC works to create an open space for all to enjoy. The Bender Melon Farm Preserve contains diverse habitats that are important to our region and essential to wildlife. The wetlands dotting the fields are the beginnings of the Phillipin Kill and serve as essential filters for surface runoff. The areas surrounding these wetlands provide vital habitat for grassland nesting birds. Bender Melon Farm remains one of the last large spaces between Slingerlands and Voorheesville where these avian species will thrive.

Additional details about the Bender Melon Farm Preserve and David's Trail can be found on our website:

www.mohawkhudson.org/our-preserves/BenderMelonFarm/

Make an Impact with End of Year Giving

Since our very first meeting on a snowy evening in 1992, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy has worked continuously to conserve the lands and waters of this region, with more than 12,500 acres permanently protected from development. While much has changed over the years and in the world around us, one thing remains abundantly clear: *nature adds immeasurable value to our lives.*

As we look to our 30th anniversary in 2022, we're dreaming BIG. With the generous support of the Miller and Love families, EVERY dollar donated from now through December 31, 2021, up to \$30,000, will be matched. This matching challenge will provide the funds necessary for MHLC to carry out our vital mission by saving vulnerable places from further development, protecting natural habitats, and providing open spaces where people and wildlife can thrive. But, we can't meet this goal without your support. Join us in stepping up to the 30x30 (\$30,000 by our 30th year) Challenge today! Your gift will help us make a significant and lasting impact by conserving the lands and waters of Albany, Schenectady, and Montgomery Counties.

- Gifts made now through December 31st will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$30,000, by the Miller and Love families.
- Every donor who gives a gift of \$200 or more from now through December 31st will be entered in a raffle to win an original framed oil painting by renowned local artist Laura Shore.

The fundraising challenge ends on December 31st.

Donate now to double your impact!

www.mohawkhudson.org/Donate-Now



Oil painting by Laura Shore, www.farmsharestudio.com

Giving Thanks for Great Things

While we missed gathering in-person, we were grateful for the outpouring of support for our biggest event of the year. Thank you for logging in and joining us on September 30th for our virtual program of Great Things Are On The Horizon, where we honored artist Len Tantillo for his exceptional artwork and interpretation of the landscapes and history of the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys and recognized Ellie Prakken and John Smolinsky (Dan Driscoll Volunteer Leadership Award), Dennis O'Leary and The Bioreserve (Saving Special Places Award), and Marilyn Fancher for their outstanding commitment to conservation in the Capital Region.

Another notable success of the fall fundraiser was our fabulous silent auction, which featured an interesting selection of 95 items, many of which prompted some lively bidding competition! The auction raised the funds that helped us toward our goal of \$75,000. Special thanks to Sarah Carroll (Board Chair), Lauren Iselin, and Cathie Love for their hard work organizing and implementing the auction. We're especially grateful for all of the participants and in-kind donors whose generosity helped make the auction successful.

As we look forward to the new year, we are hopeful for more in-person gatherings where we can reconnect with the MHLC community on the lands you help to save year after year.



The mixed media painting *Montagne Violette I* by artist Ellie Prakken received 25 bids—the highest number of bids on an auction item this year—and raised over \$600.



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VIEWPOINTS

Winter 2021

OUR MISSION

To conserve and steward lands and waters of the Hudson and Mohawk River Valleys for the benefit of people and the environment.

Now is the time to give!

Make a donation of \$200 or more by December 31, and you will automatically be entered in a raffle to win a beautiful winterscape oil painting by local artist Laura Shore! You can also DOUBLE your impact with our 30x30 Matching Challenge. Look inside for details or visit www.mohawkhudson.org.

To see more of Laura Shore's work, visit www.farmsharestudio.com.

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Photo: Detail from oil painting by Laura Shore

Interested in Sponsorship? Visit www.mohawkhudson.org/2021Partners.