

Orange County Land Trust

P.O. Box 269, 23 White Oak Drive, Sugar Loaf, NY 10981 (845) 469-0951 www.oclt.org

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Contact: Caroline Hamling
845.469.0951, x14
caroline@oclt.org

Warwick Leads the Way....Again Town Contracts with Land Trust to Monitor Its Conserved Lands

Sugar Loaf (OCLT): In what is being hailed as “groundbreaking” by New York’s conservation community, the Town of Warwick and the Orange County Land Trust recently entered into an agreement in which the Land Trust will be responsible for monitoring and stewarding the town’s 24 properties under conservation easement, about 3,000 acres of farmland and open space.

The agreement, initiated by Supervisor Michael Sweeton and approved by Warwick’s Town Board, establishes a one year contract with the nonprofit Land Trust to monitor the town’s conservation easements for changes and violations, and also, when requested, for the Land Trust to create baseline documentation for any new conservation easement properties acquired by the town, as well as for existing conservation easements without baseline documentation.

Many of the town’s easements are co-held with Orange County, Orange County Land Trust, Scenic Hudson Land Trust, or Open Space Conservancy. Orange County Land Trust will either assist these partner organizations, or take the lead role in monitoring as necessary to ensure all Town of Warwick conservation easements are annually monitored and in compliance.

According to Ethan Winter, New York Conservation Manager for the Land Trust Alliance, this relationship between a land trust and a municipality is a very new concept in New York State and even more so in the Hudson Valley. The only model for this type of partnership is one also formed recently between the Wallkill Valley Land Trust and the Town of New Paltz.

“The Town of Warwick is pleased to work with Orange County Land Trust, and trusts their professionalism and commitment in ensuring that our easements obtained through our farm preservation program are respected,” said Supervisor Sweeton. “We look forward to continuing our joint efforts to protect the beauty and resources of Orange County for future generations.”

Orange County Land Trust was recently accepted into the national Land Trust Alliance's accreditation program. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, awards accreditation to land trusts that meet national standards of excellence and adhere to industry-wide standards and best practices in protecting important natural areas and working lands.

"We applaud the Supervisor and members of the Town Board for their foresight and concern for the protection of these lands in perpetuity," said Jim Delaune, executive director of Orange County Land Trust. "We look forward to working with them and being a partner in the continued preservation and stewardship of these lands which contribute greatly to the unique character, economy and beauty of the Warwick Valley."

Under Sweeton's leadership, the town has protected thousands of acres of farmland through the implementation of a voter supported real estate transfer tax to help purchase the development rights to these farms. This legislation established the town's Community Preservation Fund, helping foster the business of agriculture while promoting responsible growth.

Land trusts such as Orange County Land Trust work with landowners and the community to conserve land by accepting donations of land and fee purchases, negotiating private, voluntary conservation agreements, and stewarding conserved properties in perpetuity. There are 1,700 land trusts in the U.S. that have conserved 37 million acres of land - an area roughly the size of all the New England states combined.

For its part, Orange County Land Trust has helped protect nearly 4,500 acres of land in communities throughout Orange County, including 12 working farms. The Trust works in partnership with other conservation organizations, including Open Space Institute, with which it partnered to protect three working farms with the Town of Warwick. The Trust also helped protect 435 acres of land in Greenville with OSI and the NY-NJ Trail Conference which will link to a 50-mile corridor for public recreation along the Shawangunk Ridge. In addition, the Land Trust owns and stewards 11 nature preserves which are free and open to the public every day.



-The Wright Family Farm on Kings Highway, Warwick, one of the many farms protected by the Town of Warwick, to be monitored and stewarded by Orange County Land Trust under a recent agreement reached between the Trust and the Town.



-Town of Warwick Supervisor Michael Sweeton (center) makes official an agreement between the town and the Orange County Land Trust for the monitoring and stewardship of the town's 3,000 acres of conserved lands, with Chris Kenyon (left) Orange County Land Trust Conservation and Stewardship Director, and Executive Director Jim Delaune (right).