



LAND TRUST COMMUNITY WELCOMES OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FUNDING

Ulster County Executive Hein announces new \$3 million initiative

KINGSTON, N.Y. – Feb. 4, 2014 – Conservation organizations throughout Ulster County have expressed strong support for the Open Space and Recreation Fund program announced by Ulster County Executive Mike Hein in his State of the County address on Jan. 28, 2014.

The fund will provide support for protecting and enhancing open spaces that are critical to the county's agricultural, recreational and tourism economy. In his State of the County address, Mr. Hein noted that this "green infrastructure" is an asset that the county can build upon to ensure future prosperity.

"The fact is that economic development goes hand and hand with environmental protection," Hein said. "Quality of life issues like clean water and clear air, and access to the great outdoors, are all part of business attraction and business retention in this new economy."

The new fund – the first program of its kind in the county – will award matching grants to municipalities and qualified not-for-profit organizations that are investing in open space protection or recreational facilities. Purchase of land for public benefit, conservation easements on working farmland, creating access to recreational trails, and upgrades to municipal parks, playgrounds and swimming pools, will be eligible for funding.

"We applaud County Executive Hein's announcement of the Ulster County Open Space and Recreation Fund program, which will enable local communities to access and leverage private, philanthropic and state funding for farmland protection, recreation, and enhanced public access," said Land Trust Alliance New York Conservation Manager Ethan

Winter. "This initiative represents a much appreciated vote of confidence in the county's network of successful land trusts."

"County Executive Hein's creation of the county's first-ever open space and recreation program is just what is needed to leverage significant federal and private dollars to secure our region's foodshed, connect trails, and protect treasured natural resources along the Hudson River that are significant drivers of the county's agricultural and tourism economies," said Scenic Hudson President Ned Sullivan. "This investment will help ensure long-term prosperity and health for Ulster County's residents."

"The Open Space Institute congratulates County Executive Hein for taking bold action to increase the pace of conservation and public access improvements in Ulster County," said OSI President and CEO Kim Elliman. "From the 'Gunks and farms in the Walkkill and Rondout Valleys, to Overlook Mountain and the Rosendale Trestle, OSI has long worked to preserve and create access to the county's breathtaking natural beauty, and we look forward to this new partnership."

"Investing in green spaces improves the quality of our daily lives and the economy in Ulster County," said The Nature Conservancy's Shawangunk Ridge Program Director Cara Lee. "It is a wise, cost-effective way to make our communities healthier and more resilient for the future."

"We are pleased that County Executive Hein recognizes the economic benefits that land preservation will bring to Ulster County," said Trust for Public Land New York State Director Marc Matsil. "Our previous research found that every \$1 invested in land and water protection returns \$7 in economic value to New York State."

"Mike Hein's open space and recreation program will help create new pathways to nature for people of all ages and abilities, so that priority conservation land is protected and made accessible for outdoor exploration and nature discovery," said Mohonk Preserve Executive Director Glenn Hoagland. "This initiative complements the 'Healthy Ulster' program, which recognizes the health benefits of outdoor recreation, and will create partnerships to put people at the center of nature."

"Through this new fund, the County Executive affirms his commitment to developing a world-class trail network that connects county residents and visitors to the Catskill Mountains, the Hudson River and beyond," said Kingston Land Trust Chair Andi Turco-Levin. "This funding will help expand recreation and mobility options for Kingston's residents, a major theme of

the Kingston Greenline, our partnership with the city and surrounding land trusts to create an urban hub for the county's growing trail system."

"Our supporters applaud Mike Hein for his vision in partnering with the NYC DEP to create a rail trail along the Ashokan Reservoir that will bring free, safe opportunities for healthy recreation to northern Ulster County," said Chairman of the Woodstock Land Conservancy Kevin Smith. "This additional support for open space and recreation can help create vital trail connections from Kingston to the Catskills, creating a world-class destination for residents and tourists from New York City and beyond."

"This critical new funding can support projects like extension of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail that are making a real difference in our region's economy," said Wallkill Valley Land Trust Executive Director Christine DeBoer. "Open space and recreation funding also fits into federal, state and local objectives around increasing access to alternative transportation corridors, getting our residents and visitors more physically active, and increasing land preservation."

For more information on land trusts working in Ulster County, visit www.ulstercountylandtrusts.org.