

Partners Preserving

A 'Last
Great
Place'

*Saving
the Shawangunk Ridge
for Future
Generations*



Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership

Joined by a Common Cause

Composed of non-profit and public agencies, the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is dedicated to protecting the sensitive wildlife habitat and other natural resources of the Shawangunk Mountains. This rugged landscape is renowned for the biodiversity — or variety of life — that thrives in these summit lands, surrounded by the villages, towns, and road networks of an increasingly developed region.



Minnewaska State Park Reserve

Informed by field research and scientific analysis, partners manage over 40,000 protected acres of the Shawangunks, provide environmental education, and work with local communities to preserve open space on the slopes of the ridge.

Featuring a tapestry of forests and cliffs, open fields, lakes, and streams, the Shawangunks are the ecological and economic centerpiece of the region.

Surrounding the ridge are a patchwork of farmlands, historic village centers, and residential areas — all of which derive value from their direct connection to the open space and natural resources of the ridge.



Ruth Smiley



Minnewaska State Park Reserve



Mohonk Preserve



John Hayes

A Resource Under Pressure

Located just two hours north of New York City, the northern Shawangunks draw over 500,000 visitors annually, who come to hike, bike, and rock climb — and to enjoy the high-contrast vistas of cliffs, forests, fields, and streams. Partners face the challenge of accommodating such a volume of visitors while protecting a landscape identified as one of the highest priorities for conservation in the eastern United States.



Gary Kitchen



Harvey Payne



Garry Gleason

An Enduring but Fragile Landscape

The spectacular cliffs of the Shawangunks owe their existence to quartz conglomerate — one of the most durable rocks on earth. The exposed, conglomerate bedrock caps ancient layers of dark, flaky shale.

Over tens of thousands of years, glaciers sculpted the landscape, leaving behind the magnificent sky lakes, dramatic cliffs, and rock outcrops. Today we enjoy the cascading waterfalls, deep forest glens, ice caves, and scenic vistas of this priceless and irreplaceable ecosystem.

The stark cliffs, exposed summits, and rocky plateaus provide refuge for a wealth of rare and endangered plants and animals that have adapted to these tough living conditions — including 2,000 acres of globally rare, dwarf pitch pine, stunted by the harsh growing conditions on the ridge.

Designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of the earth's "Last Great Places," the Shawangunks harbor more than 1,400 known species, including over 30 rare plant and animal species. The Shawangunks' interconnected, protected areas give black bears, bobcats, fisher, coyote, hawks, falcons, warblers, timber rattlesnakes, and other animals access to the diversity of shelter, food, and mates they need to survive.

Using Science to Protect the Natural World

Since the Partnership's inception in 1994, members have worked together to protect, maintain, and — where necessary — restore the natural communities and native species of the northern Shawangunks and the ecological processes upon which they depend.

The Partnership uses science to inform and guide land management. Using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, the Partnership has inventoried and mapped the forests, barrens, and wetlands in and around the ridge. The Partnership used this data to create the first set of guidelines for managing this land and all of its resources as one integrated landscape. Treating the ridge as a whole will help ensure the survival of the sum and all of its parts.

The Partnership has become a model of how to successfully protect a wild refuge in an increasingly developed region.



Bill Cramer

Actively Working to Protect the Ridge

Preserving our Forests

Healthy forests are the basic building block on which all life depends. The extensive forests of the Shawangunks help cool the summer's heat, clean the air we breathe, and protect a large, healthy watershed. Forests also reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Partners work to maintain the diversity and extent of our forests by monitoring and addressing deer over-browsing, removing invasive non-native vegetation, and educating the public about the ecological impacts of fire suppression.



Ruth Smiley



Roland Bahret

Maintaining the Quality of our Water

The streams of the Shawangunks recharge the limited groundwater aquifers in the valley below, which provide clean water for area residents. Many wetlands linking developed areas and the ridge are also important to groundwater recharge as well. Partners have helped protect the Shawangunk watershed by teaching people how to maintain healthy streams — both on the ridge and in their home communities.



John Hayes

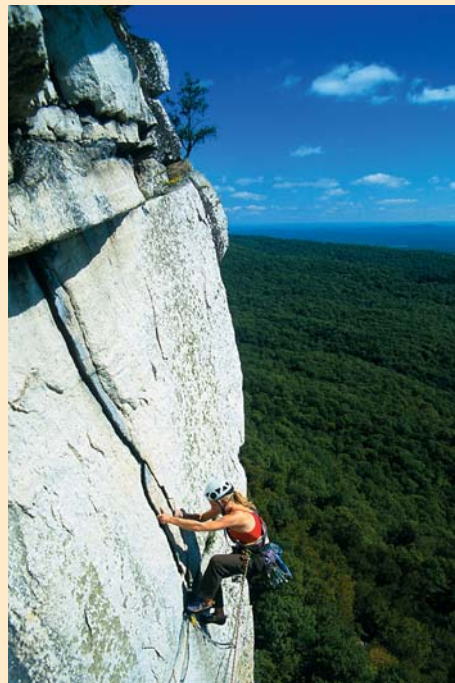
Building Stronger Local Economies

The hundreds of thousands of annual visitors to the ridge contribute more than \$10 million a year in revenue to local restaurants, hotels, and other area businesses.

Partners are helping local communities capture these tourism dollars by seeking Scenic Byway designation for a 60-mile loop connecting tourism businesses and other destinations around the ridge. Participating communities are committed to protecting open space inside this scenic route.



John Hayes



Matt Calardo

Addressing Threats to the Ridge



Garry Gleason

Encroaching Development

Preserving large tracts of interconnected, open areas — both on and off the ridge — is crucial for the survival of healthy forests and the plants and animals that live there.

Only 40% of the ridge is protected from encroaching development. The Partnership has identified an additional 25,000 to 40,000 acres that need to be protected through acquisition, easements, or local land use planning.

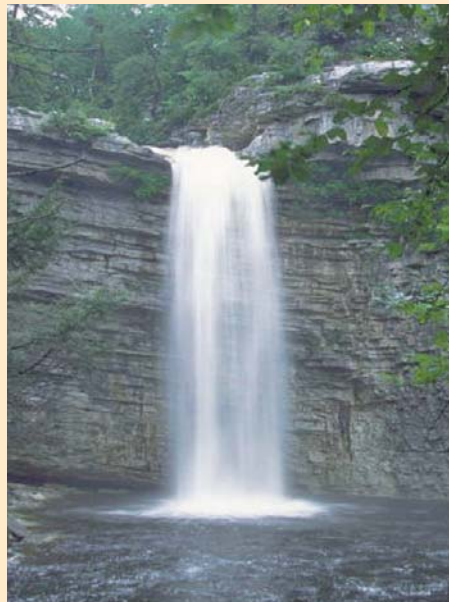
Through its **Green Assets** project, the Partnership is working with local communities to protect viewsheds, forests, and farmlands that border the ridge. The Partnership provides communities with GIS data for natural resource inventories, technical assistance on open space protection, and access to other state and regional resources.



The Nature Conservancy

Visitor Impact

Visitor overuse can cause soil erosion and compaction, vegetation loss, and the spread of invasive, non-native plants. Heavy foot or bike traffic can disturb animal habitats, and unleashed pets can injure wildlife. Partners encourage people to “leave no trace” when they visit the ridge.



John Hayes



The Nature Conservancy

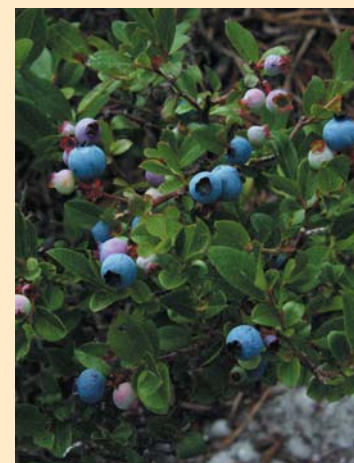
Wildfire Suppression

Fire is a beneficial ecological process that has shaped the forests of the ridge. Fire can promote the healthy growth of plant life — like wild blueberries, pitch pines, and wildflowers — that actually need occasional fires to thrive. Wildfire suppression has resulted in the build-up of natural fuels, leaving the forest vulnerable to devastating fires.

The Partnership is testing the use of controlled fires to reduce the build-up of dead wood and underbrush that can lead to catastrophic wildfires.



The Nature Conservancy



Garry Gleason



Tom Sarro

Pathways to the Future

Strategies for Land Management

How we treat our lands is one of the most important challenges facing us today. By recognizing the resources we treasure and by building land-use strategies compatible with this community vision, we can keep the Shawangunks intact and healthy — for generations to come.

Investing in the Partnership means protecting green assets that provide local communities with clean air and water, recreational opportunities, and economic revitalization. A model that other conservation areas can follow, the Partnership shows how private and public land managers can successfully build bridges with local officials and town residents to collectively protect threatened open space in an increasingly developed area.

The Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is a collaboration of the Cragmoor Association, Friends of the Shawangunks, Mohonk Preserve, The Nature Conservancy, New York Natural Heritage Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Museum, Open Space Institute, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

For more information about the Partnership and for referrals to other partners, contact::



Minnewaska State Park Preserve (845) 255-0752

Mohonk Preserve (845) 255-0919

Open Space Institute (212) 629-3981

The Nature Conservancy (845) 255-9051

The Shawangunk Ridge has been designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of earth's "Last Great Places."

The project is funded in part by the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation and the New York State Biodiversity Research Institute.

Contributions to the Partnership are tax-deductible.

Located between the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River, the Shawangunks are a northern section of the Appalachian Mountains, extending 50 miles from the New Jersey state line to Ulster County, New York.

