

2011 annual report





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The photographs illustrating this year’s Annual Report are just a few of the many fine works submitted to our 25th Anniversary Exhibition Photography in the Landscape. The show was curated by Kathleen Triem with Carrie Haddad and was exhibited at the Spencertown Academy, the Old Chatham Country Store and the Roeliff Jansen Community Library. Our thanks to all of the photographers who shared their inspiring perspectives of our extraordinary county. We welcome submissions from photographers for use in our publications at anytime.

To see all of the photographs from the exhibition go to clctrust.org/events/photography-in-the-landscape.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL FREDERICKS

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to our successes in 2011.

The year 2011 marked the occasion of our 25th anniversary and was another year of tremendous activity at the Columbia Land Conservancy. As described in the pages that follow, each of our five major program areas moved forward at a strong pace. We protected another 850 acres of privately owned land, including more than 300 acres of valuable, working farm land. Our 2,000-acre system of public conservation areas continued to provide respite and connections to the natural world for thousands of people of all ages and an outdoor classroom for dozens of our educational programs. We made major progress on the expansion of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail and several other significant trail

projects in the county, produced a day-long county-wide trails conference, and inaugurated a county Conservation Advisory Council Roundtable to facilitate the exchange of ideas between municipalities concerned with balancing development and conservation. And our farmer-landowner match program brought the total acreage on which we have facilitated a return to productive use to almost 1,000, providing a vehicle for existing farms to attain greater profitability and beginning farmers to put down roots.

For all of those solid conservation accomplishments the primary public focus of the year was on outreach – efforts to broaden and deepen public awareness of the exceptionally rich conservation qualities of the lands, habitats and natural features of Columbia County and of our work to ensure the qualities that make the county such a wonderful and unusual place will remain for generations to come.

Today, as we look back over the past 25 years and forward to the next 25, we see that:

- In our first 25 years we made tremendous gains in conservation, and have developed into one of the most substantial, effective and respected local land trusts in the United States;
- Very significant additional conservation opportunities (and threats) remain;
- We are working to secure a future for this county that a vast majority of people who live here would like to see – a future where agriculture plays a significant role in the economy, where development is done in a way that respects our rural heritage, and where there remains an abundance of scenic open lands and a rich variety of wildlife.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to our successes in 2011. With continuing, broad community support, we are confident of a future marked by many more, exciting and significant conservation achievements.

Please come to our events, or just drop by our office, to hear more about them.

Peter Paden
Executive Director

Deborah E. Lans
Chair

PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY FREEDNER

Celebrating 25 Years of Rural Conservation

For the last year, the Columbia Land Conservancy has been celebrating 25 years of local conservation and connecting people to the land. Bookmarked between two Country Barbecues, we used the occasion of our 25th anniversary to launch a significant campaign to broaden and deepen our conservation impact in Columbia County. We continued numerous on-going projects associated with the five major program initiatives we've been pursuing in the last few years: conservation easements, public conservation areas, education, land use planning and support for farming. But in addition we undertook a number of additional activities designed to significantly increase public awareness and support for the work we are doing. Specifically we:

- Sought to engage new segments of the population through programs that linked the outdoors, arts, and recreation. We held painting and photography classes at several of our public conservation areas, sponsored contests for local students to submit original films and essays that expressed their interest in the natural world, co-hosted a talk by renowned environmentalist Bill McKibben which was attended by a crowd of over 300, and partnered with Family Resources of Columbia County on a series of programs designed specifically for families with young children.
- Held 181 outdoor education and recreation programs, reaching 3,170 people. These programs were designed to help reconnect children and families to nature and open space.
- Expanded our base of supporters by 180 new families (a 10% increase) and made significant progress towards our goal of having 2,500 supporting families.
- Initiated a volunteer ambassador program, enlisting the help of individuals of all ages who have a shared belief in the importance of our mission, to help us expand our reach throughout the county.
- Collaborated with the towns of Stuyvesant, Stockport, Kinderhook, Hillsdale and Copake on multiuse trail projects, moving us closer to our goal of creating access to 25 miles of new trails.
- Increased the amount of protected lands in the county to 22,000 acres and made significant progress on projects that will protect several thousand additional acres.

We hope you had the opportunity to join us at some of our programs and to visit at least one of our public conservation areas and that you will continue to support us as we move into our second quarter century, working to conserve the extraordinary natural world here in Columbia County and strengthening connections between people and the land.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREAS STRESEMANN

Connecting People to the Land

A key to the success of any long-term initiative is education. This is particularly true for the work we do at CLC. Without the opportunity to experience first hand the wonders of nature, the magic of growing food, and the beauty of our surroundings, how can we expect future generations to share a commitment and appreciation for conservation? CLC's environmental education program is based on a philosophy of hands-on, experiential learning. Each year and each season, our educator works with hundreds of people, young and old, to show them how things small (monarch butterflies) and large (the Hudson River Estuary) are connected and critical to a healthy planet in the future.

One of the more popular programs we offered last year was the Nature Quest, a passport book containing rhyming clues about each of our conservation areas. The clues related to the natural history of the site and led participants to a hidden box containing a stamp to mark their book. Once all the sites were visited and all stamps collected, the passports could be redeemed for a prize. This program introduced many people to parts of the county they would not otherwise have visited, helping to build an appreciation for the wonderful natural diversity Columbia County has to offer.

In the county's public schools we presented a diverse range of programs with hands-on elements to engage students in a variety of topics relating to the environment. Students visited an apple farm, saw lambs being bottle-fed, dissected owl pellets, watched monarchs transform from caterpillar to butterfly, and planted garlic in school gardens. All told, we held 121 programs for schools, reaching 2,170 students.

At our conservation areas we built nesting boxes for blue birds, houses for bats, and homes for gnomes; tracked animals in the snow; wandered the trails looking for wildflowers and geocaches; and counted the many species of birds that live in these public spaces. If you missed out on these opportunities, please be sure to check CLC's website for a complete listing of upcoming events.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JUDY GRUNBERG

Promoting Good Land Use Policies and Practices

Community planners and elected officials around the county and around the country struggle with the seemingly competing goals of promoting economic development while retaining the individual character of their towns. CLC's Community Assistance Program helps municipalities in Columbia County realize their own vision for thoughtful development paired with conservation, enhancing the quality of life for all those fortunate enough to live here.

When asked what factors play into the quality of life in a community, access to trails and outdoor recreation are often cited. In 2011, CLC convened the first Columbia County Trails Conference to assess the local situation. Speakers provided updates on existing initiatives already underway in the county including the extension of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail to the northwest through Copake and Hillsdale, and the Kinderhook/ Stuyvesant/Stockport Trail, which is quickly moving from being a conceptual line on a map to a trail on the ground. A countywide trail vision map compiled from the input of the conference participants memorialized the energy of the day. The conference was made possible with the assistance of the National Park Service, Hudson River Valley Greenway, Parks & Trails New York and the Office of New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

In January, CLC brought together presenters from the Hudson River Estuary Program and Hudsonia Ltd, along with local volunteers to offer a training program, Conservation Advisory Councils: How They Can Help Your Town Balance Development and Conservation. In response to the enthusiasm generated by that workshop, CLC inaugurated a county Conservation Advisory Council Roundtable meeting for an exchange of information about, and mutual support for, local conservation initiatives.

A second training was offered to municipal boards and volunteers in November. Planning for Agriculture was based on the American Farmland Trust's updated publication, "Planning for Agriculture in New York: A Toolkit for Towns and Counties," and featured a variety of expert speakers as well as local municipal leaders.

Over the course of the year CLC provided assistance and technical advice to municipalities on zoning, planning, and trail projects including the Kinderhook Comprehensive Plan Committee, the Claverack Agriculture Advisory Committee/Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee and Claverack Zoning Committee, the Ancram Zoning Revision Committee, the Kinderhook/Stuyvesant/Stockport Intermunicipal Trail Committee, the Copake-Hillsdale Rail Trail Alliance, the Copake Spur Trail Committee, a Taghkanic Creek trail committee in the Town of Taghkanic, and the Keep Conservation Foundation, which owns a preserve in Germantown.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LONNY KALFUS

Providing Places for Nature and Recreation

From the Hudson River to the foothills of the Taconics, over the past 25 years CLC has created a 2,000-acre system of public lands that is enjoyed by tens of thousands of people each year. At CLC, we feel strongly that when people are given the opportunity to connect directly with the natural world, they will be more inclined to support conservation in the future. For this reason, CLC's Board has made acquiring land for public access a priority.

Columbia County has some 411,000 acres and a population of just 62,000, making it one of the least populated counties in the Hudson Valley. For all of this open space, very little of it is publicly owned. In fact, just 4.2% of the land in the county is publicly accessible, the lowest percentage of any of the neighboring counties. In 2011, CLC partnered with several other organizations and entities to create some significant additions and improvements to lands available for recreation and enjoyment.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful was the transfer of 550 acres of forestland along the border of Austerlitz and Canaan. This property, lovingly known as 'The Kingdom,' was part of long-time CLC trustee Jonathan Schor's Estate that was bequeathed to CLC. After a lengthy process with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the property was finally made part of the adjoining Beebe Hill State Forest, bringing the forest's total acreage to 2,548. The land will be managed as part of the State Forest system for timber as well as recreation including hiking, hunting, and fishing at No Bottom Pond.

Elsewhere in the county, CLC staff worked with the Keep Conservation Foundation in Germantown to help this private group create more formalized public access to 143 acres of fields and woodlands in Germantown. We also partnered with Scenic Hudson to begin work on a new trail that will link the Greenport Conservation Area to Harrier Hill Park to north.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SY BALSEN

Conserving Rural Lands

Six properties, each with unique and varied conservation values, were permanently protected by CLC in 2011. Collectively these landowners conserved 844 acres across the county. Their actions today will help ensure that tomorrow's farmers, naturalists, and outdoor enthusiasts will have the opportunity to enjoy the abundant natural resources and incredible beauty that define our county.

Three of the projects completed are part of an assemblage of farms in Stuyvesant that we are working to conserve with Scenic Hudson. The deep soils along the Hudson River makes this part of the county a particularly vibrant agricultural community. Using funds from Scenic Hudson's Lila Acheson and DeWitt Wallace Hudson Valley Land Protection Endowment, we purchased the development rights on Monkshood Nursery, an 82 acre diversified farm that includes a vegetable CSA, greenhouses full of nursery stock, and livestock. The neighbors to the north, Kieran Goodwin and Catherine Rocco, donated the development rights on their 84 acre property, and made its farmland available to David Rowley of Monkshood. A little further the north, the historic Johannis L. Van Alen farm was protected by its current owner, adding another 233 acres of farmland to the growing block of conserved land in Stuyvesant.

Elsewhere in the county, Chris Jones of Catskill View Farm, LLC placed a conservation easement on 297 acres, reserving just six house sites on land that had previously been approved for a 13-lot subdivision. In Canaan, Byron and Ingrid Greenfield protected 94 acres of working forest and in nearby New Lebanon, Doug and Judy Upton donated a conservation easement on 54 acres. The Upton's property was previously donated as a "tradeland" to CLC by Hiroshi Matsuzaki and Susan Goldberg, with the sale proceeds going to further CLC's mission.

We thank each of the individuals involved in these transactions and commend their collective commitment to protecting the farms, forest, wildlife habitat and scenic resources of Columbia County.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ULI ROSE



Strengthening and Promoting the Farm Community

Farming has long been one of the mainstays of Columbia County's economy and landscapes. Columbia County has one of the most diversified agricultural economies in the Hudson Valley boasting orchards, dairies, vineyards, vegetable farms, and specialty producers and growers of all kinds. The success of agriculture in the county will help ensure the future health of the local economy through direct sales, farm-related purchases, tourism, and employment. It will also serve to keep large portions of the County's landscape open for wildlife, buffer our precious water resources, and provide a local source of healthy and sustainable food.

At CLC, we are working in partnership with local farmers to make sure they will have access to land for their operations now and in the future. Much of the land on which we hold conservation easements is in active production, with high-quality soils supporting vegetables and other row crops; and areas with lesser quality soils providing pasture land for beef cattle, dairy cows, sheep, goats, and horses. Still more land around the county is owned by people who, while not farmers themselves, would like to see their property in active production.

To that end, CLC's Farmer Land Owner Match Program has placed some 20 farmers on 920 acres of land with low or no-cost leases. Our staff has been asked to present on this innovative program at conferences throughout the region and on national webinars. As part of this effort, we held three sold-out workshops for landowners, farmers and real estate-related professionals covering the intricacies of establishing successful partnerships between farmers and landowners.

This locally grown program has been emulated by other Hudson Valley land trusts and is now serving as a model for development of a more regionalized system of making land available for agriculture at an affordable rate. The matches we've made range from a few acres for cut flowers, to large tracts for hay and pasture. What's most encouraging perhaps is that many of the farmers involved are young entrepreneurs looking to capitalize on the growing demand for locally produced food. The future of farming in Columbia County is looking up!

PHOTOGRAPH BY B. DOCKTOR



Achieving National Accreditation

CLC has long been viewed by its peer organizations as a model institution with good practices and strong policies. Now, that status has been made official. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent arm of the national Land Trust Alliance, awarded CLC accredited status. Accredited land trusts meet rigorous standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The accreditation seal lets the public know that the accredited land trust has undergone an extensive, external review of the governance and management of the organization, its finances, and the systems and policies it uses to protect land.

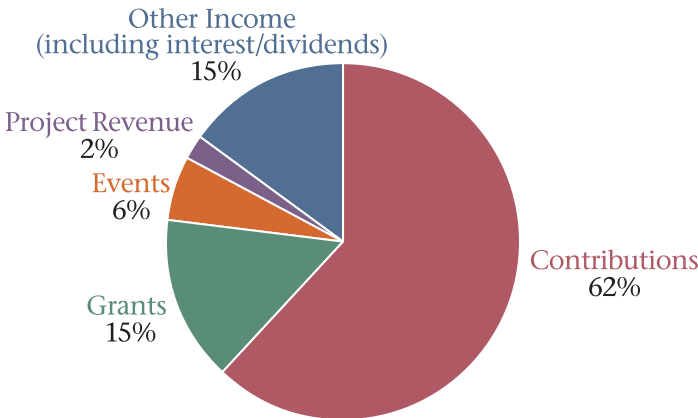
The accreditation process took about a year from the time CLC first applied for consideration, until the final approval was granted in February of 2011. The Columbia Land Conservancy is one of 150 out of 1,700 land trusts across the country that has been awarded accreditation since the process was initiated in the fall of 2008.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance and is governed by a volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country. The Land Trust Alliance, of which CLC is a member, is a national conservation group based in Washington, D.C. that works to save the places people love by strengthening conservation throughout America. LTA represents the interests of the land trust community with Congress and federal regulators, provides critical professional training and resources, and works in many other ways to support the work of CLC and other land trusts across the nation.

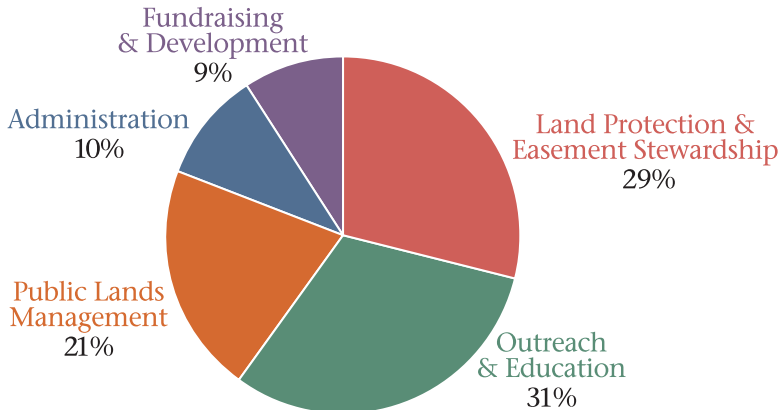
CLC's accreditation provides assurance to those who have chosen to invest in its mission that CLC is taking all the right steps towards ensuring its existence well into the future.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT DRAKE

UNRESTRICTED REVENUES



UNRESTRICTED EXPENSES



To our supporters:
Your support of the Columbia Land Conservancy is a responsible investment to help ensure that Columbia County retains all of its special characteristics. Our work to protect the farmland, forest, wildlife habitat and rural character of Columbia County is sustained primarily by generous contributions from individual donors.

The Columbia Land Conservancy, our staff and board are committed to service of our mission, and strive to be effective leaders in conserving the special qualities of this beautiful county. That means putting your dollars to use on the ground: Eighty one percent of the organization's income goes directly to our programmatic work, including a broad range of land protection activities described in the preceding pages, managing and maintaining our ten public conservation areas, hands-on environmental education, assisting communities with good land use planning and projects, working with the agricultural community, and much much more.

Many thanks for your continued support!

Mark Levy
Mark Levy Treasurer

2011 FINANCIAL REPORT

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
For the Year ended December 31, 2011

Assets	
Current Assets	\$1,110,497
Investments (fair market value)	3,117,892
Fixed Assets (net of depreciation)	1,321,470
Land	2,986,508
Total Assets	\$8,536,367
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$ 22,058
Accrued Expenses	39,372
Deferred Revenue	4,250
Other	10,960
Total Liabilities	\$ 76,640
Net Assets	
Beginning Net Assets	\$8,367,104
Change in Net Assets	92,623
Ending Net Assets	\$8,459,727
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$8,536,367

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets
For the Year ended December 31, 2011

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	
Contributions	\$1,167,790
Foundation and Government Grants	285,470
Events	115,058
Project Revenue	43,336
Other Income	233,409
Interest/Dividends	61,537
Gain (Loss) on Investments	(182,735)
Total Revenue and Support	\$1,723,865
EXPENSES	
Outreach & Education	\$ 513,724
Land Protection/Easement Stewardship	477,067
Public Lands Management	341,785
Fundraising & Development	154,157
Administration	144,509
Total Expenses	\$1,631,242
Change in Net Assets	\$92,623

CLC's financial records have been audited by Downey, Sweeney, Fitzgerald & Company, Certified Public Accountants, PC. CLC continues to receive an unqualified, independent audit decision. A complete copy of the 2011 audited financial statements may be obtained by written request to CLC and are available on CLC's website at www.clctrust.org.

The Board of Trustees and staff of the Columbia Land Conservancy would like to extend our sincerest thanks to everyone who made contributions to the Conservancy in 2011. Reflected below are contributions received between January 1st, 2011 and December 31st, 2011. Every effort has been made to produce an accurate listing of supporters of the Conservancy. Please contact Marcia Cary at 392-5252 ext. 202 or marcia@clctrust.org to note any corrections. CLC is pleased to report that, once again, in 2011 100% of our board members contributed to our operating support.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Columbia Land Conservancy works with the community to conserve the farmland, forests, wildlife habitat and rural character of Columbia County, strengthening connections between people and the land.

CORE VALUES

In carrying out our work, the Columbia Land Conservancy is guided by the following core values:

Stewardship - Columbia County's scenic landscapes, diverse wildlife habitats, and fragile natural resources are a trust to be conserved for future generations through sound stewardship practices.

Community - A shared appreciation for the land contributes to a strong and healthy community. Our conservation agenda should be responsive to the needs and desires of the people who live here.

Tradition - Agriculture has played a defining role in shaping Columbia County's natural environment and community character. The working landscapes of the countryside and historic rural patterns of settlement in hamlets, villages and towns are central to our heritage and should be maintained

Collaboration - We collaborate with other groups and individuals with common objectives. We listen to all concerns. We treat everyone with respect.

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