



BKAA

GUARDIAN

Volume 39 • Number 3

Autumn 2025





Dear Jackie, Bill, Christine, and the BKAA Board Members who I don't know, I am so proud of the work that the BKAA is doing, needed now more than ever!

In loving memory of Paula.

Anita Altman (former BKAA Board Member)

Keep up all the great work that you do.

Adam Stuart

June 17, 2025

Hi, sorry I'm late. I didn't notice my membership expired in April. Keep up the good work!

Margaret Gorton

P.S. - I must be one of your oldest members—I will be 92 in July.

ON THE FRONT COVER:

***Volunteers and BKAA Board Members remove
invasive species from the Basha Kill.
See Story & More Photos on Page 5-6***

Poetry Corner

Summer Song

Susan Erny

Crickets and katydids

Sounding in the night

Full moon weaves

In and out of clouds and webs of trees

A most *Fragrant* summer breeze

All transport me

Somehow my feet are still on the Earth

BKAA GUARDIAN — Volume 39, Number 3 • Autumn 2025

MISSION STATEMENT:

Since our founding in 1972, our mission has been to protect the Basha Kill Wetlands and surrounding area from ecological degradation, to promote education and respect for the environment in general, and to preserve the beauty of the area.

We welcome new members who are interested in protecting the environment. Dues are \$10 per person per year. BKAA is a not-for-profit corporation and donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The *BKAA Guardian* is published quarterly by the
Basha Kill Area Association Inc., PO Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790 • 845-796-5339
President: Leslie Otto • Vice President: Mark Otto • Treasurer: Lisa Schnitzer
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CONTACT THE BKAA — info@thebashakill.org website: www.thebashakill.org
CONTACT THE DEC — Call 24-hour DEC Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1-877-457-5680

2025 BKAA Calendar of Events

Sunday, October 12 • 10 AM — Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Friday October 17 • 7 PM

Free Public Star Watch with John Kocijanski of the Catskills Astronomy Club

Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch, across from the Bashakill Vineyards. To register call John at (845) 798-8087. For event updates, visit Catskill Astronomy Club's Facebook Page. Rain date is the following day.

Sunday, November 9 • 10 AM — Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

The Decline of Volunteerism

Lisa Schnitzer

Across America, volunteerism is on the decline - and the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) is feeling the impact. Fewer helping hands mean stretched resources, more strain on our core volunteers, and the risk of doing less for the place we all love.

What the Numbers Tell Us

- **Fewer Volunteers:** Nationally, formal volunteering fell from 30% of Americans in 2019 to just 23.2% in 2021 - the steepest drop in decades. By 2023 it rebounded to 28.3%, still shy of pre-pandemic levels.
- **Less Time Given:** Average volunteer hours fell from 96.5 per year in 2017 to just 70 in 2023.
- **Recruitment Struggles:** Nearly half of nonprofit leaders say finding enough volunteers is a big problem.
- **Changing Habits:** More people are helping informally - favors for neighbors, ad-hoc good deeds - but fewer are committing to long-term, in-person roles.

These trends show that while the desire to help persists, the structure and availability of volunteer opportunities are evolving - and not always keeping pace with potential volunteers lifestyles and availability.

What This Means for the BKAA

At the BKAA, volunteers are the lifeblood of every cleanup, farmers market, and educational program. Lately, turnout at events has dropped significantly. That means fewer people to pick up litter, pull invasive species, or guide hikes - and more weight on the shoulders of the same small group of board members and core volunteers. Burnout is a real risk. If this continues, our ability to protect the Basha Kill

and offer programs to the community could be limited.

Your Role Is Imperative!

We're not asking for huge commitments - just a little time, now and then. An hour here or there truly adds up when everyone pitches in. Some volunteer opportunities with the BKAA include:

- **Annual Trail Cleanup** - 2 hours of litter pickup along the Basha Kill trails (lunch included!).
- **NEW! Invasive Species Pull** - Join a kayak or canoe outing to remove invasive plants from the waterways.
- **Advocacy** - Attend a town board or planning board meeting to help us track local issues.
- **Lead an Activity** - Share your knowledge on a guided hike or kayak tour.
- **Nature Watch** - Learn about the local wildlife and share that knowledge with visitors.
- **Water Testing** - Help our water testing team with collecting and testing water samples from the BashaKill.
- **Share Your Creativity** - Write, photograph, or create for our quarterly newsletter, The Guardian.
- **Spread the Word** - Invite friends and neighbors to get involved.

Volunteerism may be dropping nationwide, but here at the BKAA, it's still what keeps us going. With just a small effort from many, we can keep the BashaKill clean, vibrant, and protected for generations. Please watch for our email updates and follow us on Facebook and Instagram for upcoming volunteer opportunities. Let's keep the heart of the BKAA beating strong. We look forward to seeing you at a future event!

Autumn 2025 Donors

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DONORS — continued on page 5

DONORS — continued from page 4

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 Sarah Fields
 Jonathan Hyman & Gail Rubenfield
 Erica Kung

Keren Longville
 John Maraldo
 Sue & Gordon McIntire
 Christopher Titus

Work Party!

Walter Jahn — More Photos on Page 6

Volunteers and board members of the BKAAG worked hard to remove vegetation which was blocking the flow of the main Bashakill channel and remove multiple invasive species including the water chestnut and Japanese barberry. Board members also worked on land removing Mugwort from the entrance to the ADA accessible trail at Haven Rd. Parking Lot. If you can find time to help with the removal of invasive species near you, you would be improving the habitat for wildlife which depend on it! LOOK for more work parties to come in the spring!

The Bashakill can be enjoyed from a kayak as can be seen in this image of the great participants in a MEEC-sponsored outing. If you do not have your own kayak for future outings, you can rent one from the Mamakating Environmental Education Center up the road (762 South Road, Wurtsboro).



More Work Party!



The main channel of the Bashakill was so choked with weeds that it was very difficult for kayakers to pass through.



President Leslie Otto and VP Mark Otto cruise through the channel after an intense vegetation pull.

Photos by Walter Jahn



Board member and Invasive Species Warrior, Walter Jahn lead the expedition.

BKAA JOINS THE D&H CANAL BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IN WURTSBORO

Article & Photos by Lisa Schnitzer

The Basha Kill Area Association was excited to participate in Wurtsboro's D&H Canal Bicentennial Celebration, a wonderful event commemorating 200 years of the Delaware & Hudson Canal and its role in shaping the region's history.

As part of the festivities, the BKAA created a Basha Kill-themed float for the parade that truly came to life! The float featured a striking bald eagle nestled high in its nest, surrounded by great blue herons, turtles, fish, and other wetland plants and wildlife. It was a celebration not only of our natural environment but of the community's commitment to protecting it.

After the parade, the BKAA hosted activities and give-aways for the children. Kids enjoyed painting their own 1800's inspired, wildlife-themed crafts, and many left proudly showing off their freshly painted faces thanks to our amazing volunteer face painters! It was a joy to see so many young people learning about nature through hands-on fun!

We are truly grateful to the local businesses who supported our participation in the event:

The Red Dot Vegetarian Restaurant, Danny's Village Inn, and O'Tooles Harley Davidson.

Your generosity helped bring the Basha Kill to life for our community!

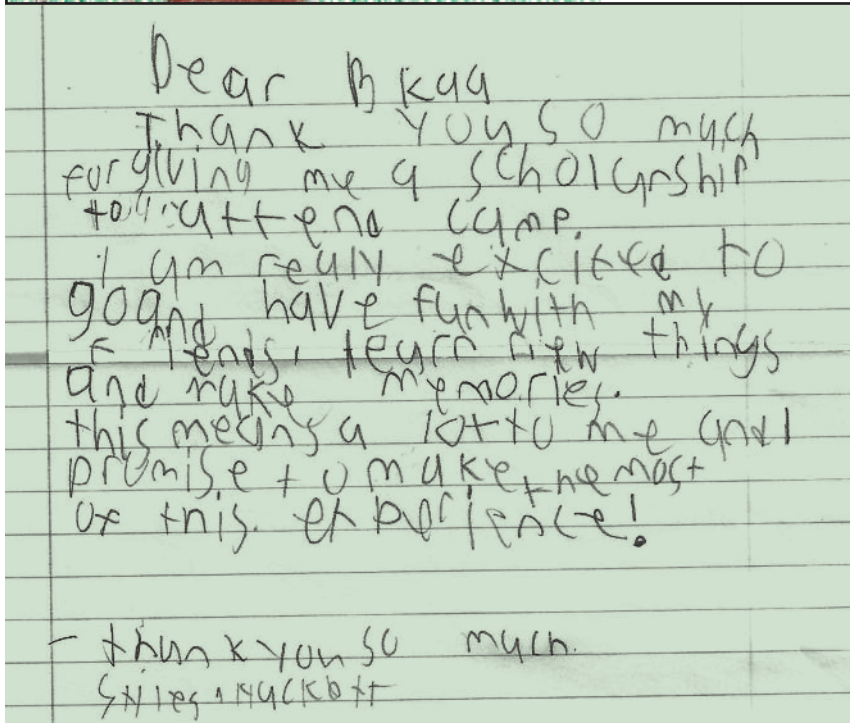
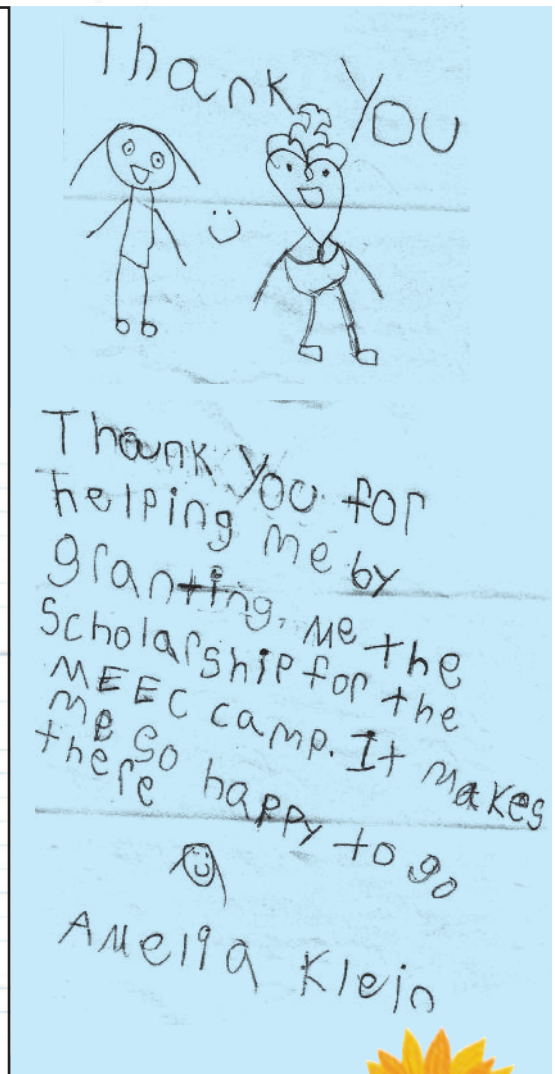
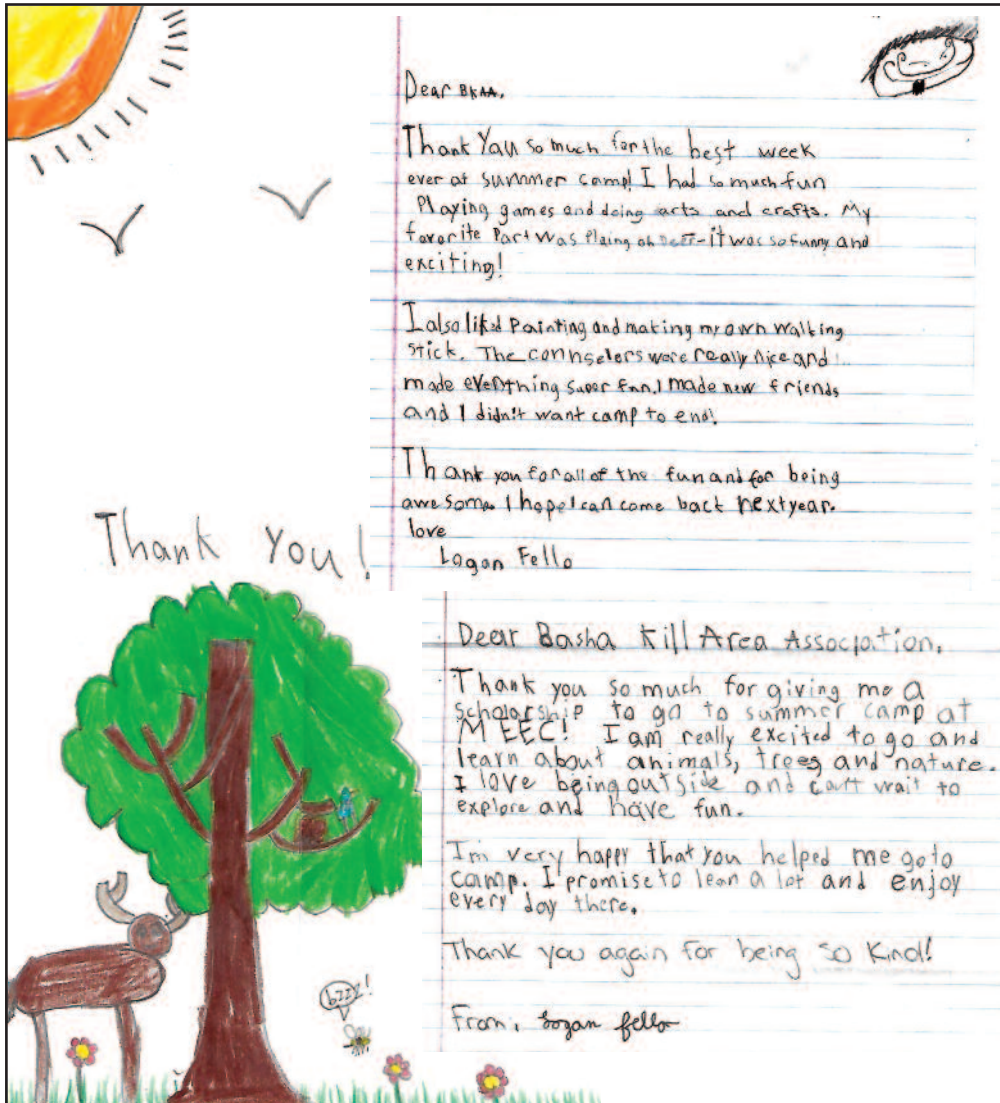
We also want to thank our individual sponsors, whose support made our presence at the celebration possible:

Kathy & Michael Schnitzer, Leslie & Mark Otto, Lisa Schnitzer, and Kim & Rob Rogers.

The BKAA is proud to be part of such a supportive and engaged community. Thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate the history - and future - of the Basha Kill and the region we call home.



MEEC Earth Warriors Camp Scholarship Winners



DEC Camp Scholarship Winners

Camp Muller

Rebecca Tejada

(Editor's Note: The BKAA was so sorry to hear that Rebecca's camp week was cancelled and she will be the first in line for camp next year. Bob and Maura have been amazing BKAA members for years, active in the cleanups, Nature Watch, and Water Testing. Bob is a past board member and Maura is our Route 17 liaison. But the way they have gone above and beyond for their friend, Rebecca, is quite extraordinary and just proves the caliber of people that they are. Thank you Bob and Maura Muller!)

I was so excited when I received my DEC Camp scholarship from the Bashakill Area Association. And when the day came for me to drive up to Camp DeBruce I was very excited (and also a little bit nervous). But when we got to the entrance someone met us and told us that Camp had been cancelled. Four counselors had come down with Covid and they would be mailing out refunds. I was so shocked and distressed. I was all packed & ready to go and now we were just going to turn around and go back home. I had been so looking forward to this since I applied for the scholarship in February.

But... the next day I was invited to spend a whole day (14 hours, breakfast, lunch & dinner included) at "Camp Muller" (run by Bob and Maura Muller). I was picked up at my house by "the bus" at 8:00 am. On our way we passed the Bashakill and then made our way up the mountain. The first thing we did when we got there was Maura showed me her plant nursery on the back porch of the "Camp Clubhouse". The plants that she keeps, she starts out there so she can move them in or out of the sun or take them inside if it gets too cold. Then when they are healthy & ready she plants them in her garden.

We then toured her garden. When you enter you pass under lots of grapes that she trained up and over the entranceway and along the fence. There were all kinds of tomatoes in all kinds of colors, string beans, peas, peppers, cucumbers, lemon cucumbers, purple lettuce, kale and green and yellow zucchini. Then we visited the pumpkin patch where the pumpkins were just beginning to turn orange. Then it was time for us to harvest and we quickly filled our basket to the top. Before we

were finished we took off all of the harmful larva that were damaging the kale and lettuce plants and we fed these pests to the birds. That's one organic way to keep your garden healthy.

After the garden we went on a long hike on this old farm (about 100 acres). We saw many Monarch Butterflies (they seemed to follow us everywhere we went). We also saw lots of milkweed plants which are very important to Monarchs. They eat the plant for food, lay their eggs on its leaves and make their cocoons on it as well. We examined two big old apple trees that very old grape vines chose to make their home in. Many of the grapes, on the lower level, had been eaten, most likely by deer. We then found some "Jewel Weed" and tried to make their seeds "explode" out. If you touch them that's what they do. But they were not ready yet, it

Hi I'm Skylar Bricker, I went to Sleepaway camp, week 2 A camp DeBruce, and I was in the Neversink cabin. I enjoyed walking to the fish hatchery and seeing the fish, and playing all the games. Some of the games I liked were the Deer and Fish game, and the one where we were animals and had to get food, water, and shelter. I also took hunter safety, It was fun when we learned how to track a animal by using fake blood we learned the proper way to safely handle a fire arm. I made friends with the other girls and had an amazing time at camp DeBruce.



CAMP MULLER — continued on page 10

CAMP MULLER — continued from page 9

was too early for them to do their trick. I spotted some frogs that were in our path. They were very tiny. One was a Northern Cricket Frog (one of the tiniest frogs in N.Y. State), a Pickerel Frog & a Green Frog. I picked each of them up, separately, to get a better look. It was pretty easy to pick them up because they were so small. If they were bigger, I might not have been so brave.

We played games too! (Bob created these.) One was called "Kats" The object is to throw a tennis ball at these fuzzy, crazy looking, bowling pin-shaped "cats" and knock down as many as you can. You get three tries. The other one was called "SPLOOSH", where you threw water balloons at this spiky target board with numbers on it. The one who gets the most points wins! I won a Narwhal bubble machine and a Pocket Etch A Sketch!!

After the games we went to a cutting garden where you cut flowers and make your own bouquets. There were so many beautiful flowers there that, at first, I was completely

overwhelmed. So, I just started with the "pinks". I learned how to cut the stem in a certain way so a new flower could grow in its place. It was a new experience that I really enjoyed and would like to do again soon.

Then on to a dairy farm that made its own ice cream! We got to see the cows that made the milk that the ice cream was made from, which was very cool. We all got M&M cookie ice cream sandwiches with chocolate ice cream. It was the best chocolate ice cream I have ever eaten!! And the M&M cookie was the perfect texture too!

Later, after finishing dinner and eating toasted marshmallows, I saw two bats flying above us, swooping, hunting mosquitoes. I had never seen a bat in my life! And then suddenly I could hear coyotes howling in the night. Some came VERY close to where we were. It was SO exciting! I tried to stay as silent as I could so they wouldn't run away. It was mind blowing!! What a really fun and adventurous day I had, and I will cherish it in my memory forever.

More DEC Camp Scholarship Winners

Thank you for the scholarship to Camp DeBruce. I had a really great time, I made friends and experienced five days without electronics. At first I thought it would be difficult, but after being there, I enjoyed not having my phone. The counselors were really nice, and the food was amazing. I had a fun time and am hoping to go back next year. Thanks so much for the experience. — Anabelle Segal

Dear BKAA

Thank you so much for the awesome week at Camp DeBruce! I had such a great time and learned a lot. One of the best parts was my hunter safety certification—I'm really proud of that.

I also made some new friends and had a lot of fun doing all the different activities. My favorite part of the whole week was the over night camping trip in the woods. It was so much fun playing camouflage and listening to scary stories.

Thank you for giving me and all the other kids such a fun and unforgettable week. I really hope I can come back next year.

Sincerely
Noah Fello

Hi, so sorry for the late response. Frank had a wonderful time at camp. He said he enjoyed this year even more than last. We appreciate the sponsorship in order for him to go. He looks forward to it. Thank you again!

Ashley & Frank Hooper

HELLO, THANK YOU for sponsoring me to let me go to DEC camp. At camp I didn't really go fishing, but I did get my hunting licence, which was nice. The hunting course was my favorite. I also liked playing basketball there. I met two new friends Sam and Dylan. We still message and talk to each other. I had lots of fun there, thank you for sponsoring me. I look forward to next summer.

From,
Frank Hooper

Mamakating Town Board Proposes Zoning Change

Frank Coviello

At the May 6, 2025, Mamakating Town board Meeting a letter from the Mamakating Local Development Corp. dated April 10, 2025 was introduced requesting a zoning change which would potentially have a negative impact on the Mountain Greenbelt zone, the Bashakill Wetlands, the Village of Wurtsboro and the Town of Mamakating. The zoning change requested the following new uses: research, experimental testing labs, light industry excluding chemical manufacturing, warehouse, lumberyard, building and landscaping contractor business, building and farm supply yards, self-storage facilities and fast-food restaurants. An additional change request was to reduce the 25-acre minimum parcel size to 3 acres.

The BKAA considers this reduction of 25 to 3 acres especially concerning. I would like to make it very clear the BKAA is not anti-development, we want development which is consistent with the town master plan and maintains the current rural atmosphere of the town. At this May 6, 2025 town board meeting, a resolution was made that an introductory local law entitled "Adding Permitted Uses to IC Zoning District and Economic Zone Overlay Districts" be submitted, and that the board hold a public hearing on May 20, 2025.

When the BKAA became aware of this proposed change we immediately began a campaign to express our concerns about this proposal. On May 19, 2025, a BKAA Action Alert was sent to our membership explaining the zoning change, why we did not agree with it entirely and urged everyone to attend the May 20, 2025 town board meeting.

The intention of the town board was to vote on the resolution following the public hearing. The attendance

at the May 20, 2025, town board meeting was standing room only! The first speaker at the public hearing was the Chairman of the Mamakating Local Development Corp. explaining their function and reasoning for the zoning change request. He was followed by 20 members of the public, 17 urged the board to extend the public comment period and expressed concerns about the proposed zoning change. A resolution to keep the public comment period open until June 3, 2025 was approved.

On May 30, 2025, a letter was sent to the Mamakating Town board by the attorney retained by the BKAA. The 10-page letter gave details regarding the BKAA concerns and listed what was legally required to proceed.

As with the May 20, 2025 meeting, the June 3, 2025 meeting was standing room only. Twenty-two speakers all agreed that the town board was trying to enact this law too quickly, the community was not in favor of the proposed change and reminded the board that they work for the people. I must mention that BKAA President Leslie Otto gave a compelling speech and was truly "Presidential"!

Her final statement was a request for anyone who agreed with her statement to please stand up. VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE ROOM STOOD UP! I urge you to go to the Mamakating Agenda Center and watch the June 3 2025 meeting video, Leslie appears at about 10 minutes.

(<https://www.mamakating.gov/AgendaCenter>)

A happy ending! At the July 15, 2025 Mamakating Town Board Meeting, the supervisor opened the meeting by announcing the Zoning Law Amendments were reviewed and will be voted down at this time.

The BKAA has lived up to its mission statement once again!





MEEC Connection Vol 21 — August 2025

Jackie Lukowski-Broder

Greetings fellow Bashakill Lovers! Here's hoping you had a beautiful summer and are looking forward to the crunch of leaves underfoot and crackling campfires. Due to a glitch, MEEC Connection did not appear in the last Guardian, so I will try to highlight both spring and summer happenings this time around.

After a bit of a rocky start due to reasons beyond our control, the kayak rentals finally got off the ground. They quickly became a big hit, with our August rentals peaking at 21, the same amount rented in the previous three months combined! August numbers included 10 new users, which shows a good combination of new and repeat usage. Between May and August, the highest number in duration of rentals was 25 rentals for 120-180 minutes, coming in second was 14 rentals at greater than 180 minutes. The longer people are out on the water, the more people get to enjoy the Bashakill, and the more money raised for Friends of MEEC and the town. The longer people are out on the water, the more people will need local restaurants, lodging and things to do. I am confident this will be a huge asset to our ecotourism town!

After worrying about the weather up until the last minute, our Spring Fairy Festival turned out to be a beautiful event, with fairies of all shapes and sizes flitting about the grounds, building beautiful houses and enjoying fairy culture. Our summer Pollinator Palooza was also a spectacular event, with the return of our butterfly tent featuring 3 different kinds of butterflies, live caterpillar exhibits, face painting by Jazmine and a perfect highlight to our amazing pollinator

garden which was peaking in all of its glory. Thank you to Pam Golben and all of our volunteers who nurture our beautiful garden. And huge shout out to our dedicated Friends of MEEC Volunteers who give of their time selflessly over and over again to make our events a success. If you would like to become a part of our volunteer efforts, please give us a call at 845-644-5014.

Our Earth Warriors Summer Camp was a big success, lots of returning campers as well as new warriors. We had three weeks of exploring nature, creating beautiful art, learning the science of it all, creating space and connectivity with the natural world, and enjoying each other's company. It was truly a fun, educational, and exciting time with Jess, Jackie G., and Caitlin. We were grateful to have you here and your dedication to the kids and our natural world did not go unnoticed. Special thank you to our guest speakers, Pam Golben, Thomas DePaulo, Liam Bartels, Frank Coviello, Tom Smith, Lorry Green, and EnCon Officer Joan Boettcher. Huge thank you to BKAA- through your generosity, four campers were given scholarships to attend Earth Warriors camp.

We spent a lot of time on outreach this summer. We were active at the Wurtsboro Board of Trade Street Fair and Farmer's Market. Considering the Farmer's Market transition from town to village event, we thought it very successful. It is a much more intimate, cozy affair with extremely friendly people. We are very much looking forward to it next year! We've also partnered with WBOT to bring a "Shop Local" Information Center to MEEC. It is an information board highlighting local businesses. So, anyone coming off the trail or the kill, looking for a place to eat or shop, can find it here at MEEC. We are currently working on

a coupon that you can pick up at MEEC and get discounts at local businesses.

On a sad note, our original animal ambassador, Nutmeg the hedgehog, has crossed the rainbow bridge. He lived to the ripe age of 5+ years (average age in captivity is 3-5 years). He was a visitor favorite and his sweet, grumpy soul will never be forgotten here.

Don't forget our hours are Wednesday- Sunday 9am-4:30 pm, stop in anytime. Whether you want to visit the critters, need information, a break from the outdoors, or you need to stock up on the BEST tick and mosquito repellent, Tickwise, we're here! Check out our programs on our web page, or on FB & Instagram (links below). Look for our annual candle making and wreath making programs, as well as a new addition, kissing balls, to celebrate the holiday season.

We are still looking for different funding avenues in order to acquire and maintain staff so that we may continue to provide the quality of programming you've all come to expect from us. To that end, the Friends of MEEC are seeking foundational and corporate sponsors willing to support our mission and vision. Significant annual funding is the goal, but we are open to smaller or one-time gifts as well. If you can help us achieve this goal in any way, please give us a call at 845-644-5014.

<https://www.facebook.com/Mamakatingnaturecenter>

<https://www.friendsofmeec.org/>





Wood Ducks in August

In spring and early summer, it is easy to distinguish between the striking breeding plumage of adult males and the subtler plumage of adult females which allow females to better camouflage themselves as they care for the young. In August, identifying wood ducks is much more difficult.

Wood ducks are the only North American duck which commonly has two broods per year and in late summer, one could observe ducklings which have not yet reached adult size. Mature males have adopted their eclipse plumage but can be distinguished from females by a white stripe along the border of their cheek, a larger white throat patch, red eyes and a red bill. Immature males which hatched this year possess a gray bill. Adult females possess a prominent white teardrop-shaped ring around their eyes. Immature females hatched this year possess a smaller white ring around their eyes.

BASHAKILL WOOD DUCKS

- 1—a) mature female
- 2—b) juvenile female
- 3—c) juvenile male
- 4—d) mature male
- 5—e) young juvenile from second summer brood



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE SUMMER BASHAKILL BIRDS?



1



2



3



4



5



6

1: black billed cuckoo

2: male red winged blackbird

3: bald eagle

4: Baltimore oriole

5: female red winged blackbird

6: mourning dove

7: cedar waxwing

8: great blue heron

9: mute swan

10: blue jay

11: green heron

12: house wren

13: common gallinule

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE SUMMER BASHAKILL BIRDS?



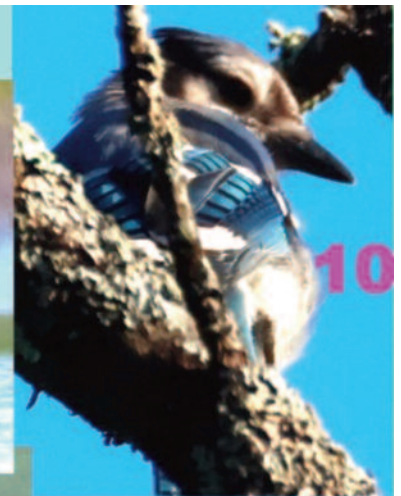
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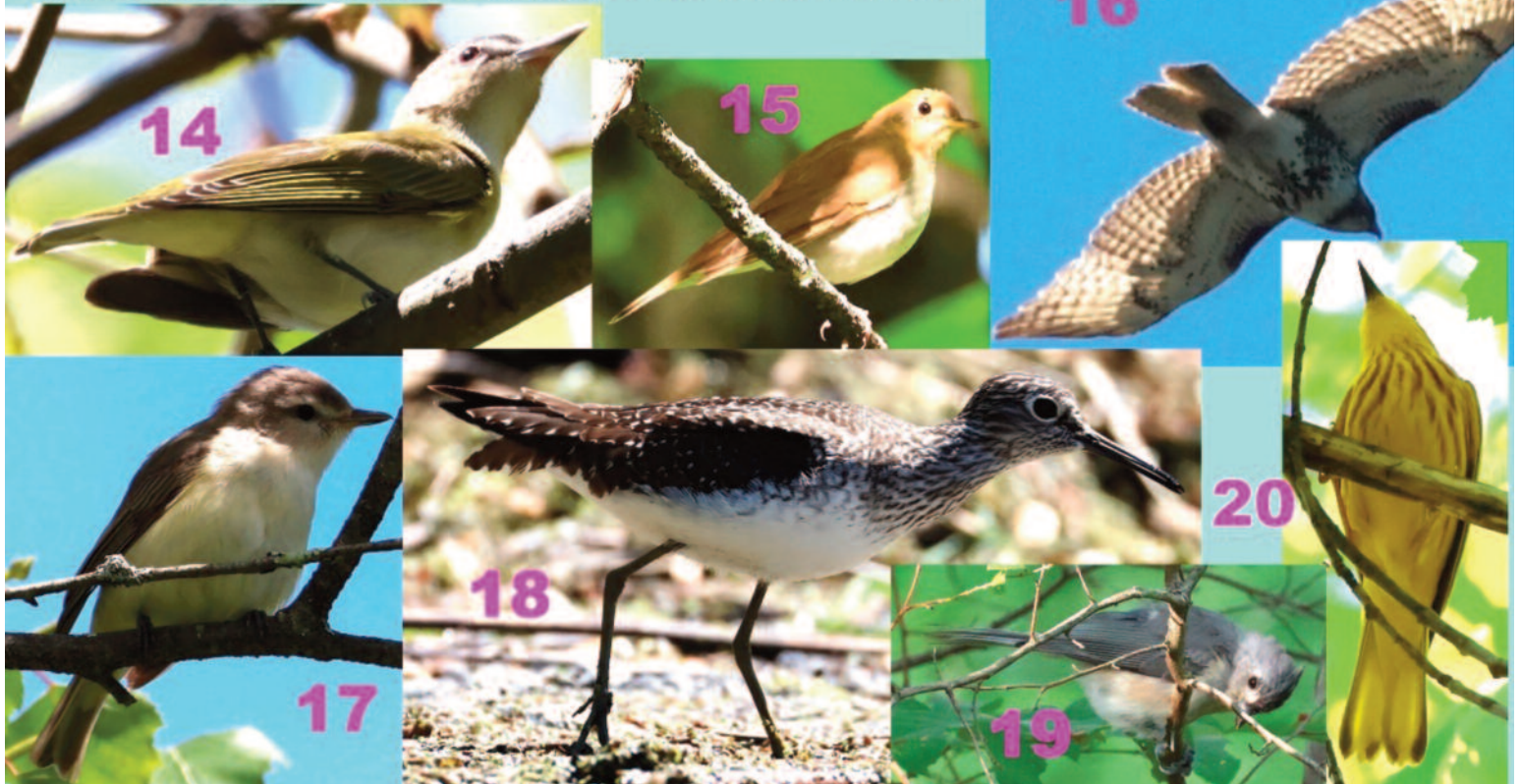


12



13

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE SUMMER BASHAKILL BIRDS?



14: red eyed vireo

15: veery

16: red tailed hawk

17: warbling vireo

18: solitary sandpiper

19: tufted titmouse

20: yellow warbler

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS BASHAKILL WILDLIFE?



21: garter snake

22: Eastern newt

23: water snake

24: cardinal flower

25: black cohosh

26: ears of white tailed deer above
Bashakill vegetation

27: whirligig beetles



AMERICAN REDSTARTS: female 6 & male 3
AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES: female 2 & male 4

COMMON YELLOWTHROATS: female 5 & male



1: Eastern kingbird
2: Eastern phoebe

3: willow flycatcher
4: least flycatcher

President Leslie Otto found these NYS DEC Guidelines while researching protected species in the area in conjunction with Exit 112 & 113 zoning. It also should be noted that it is ILLEGAL to kill rattlesnakes or move dirt in known den sites in New York State.



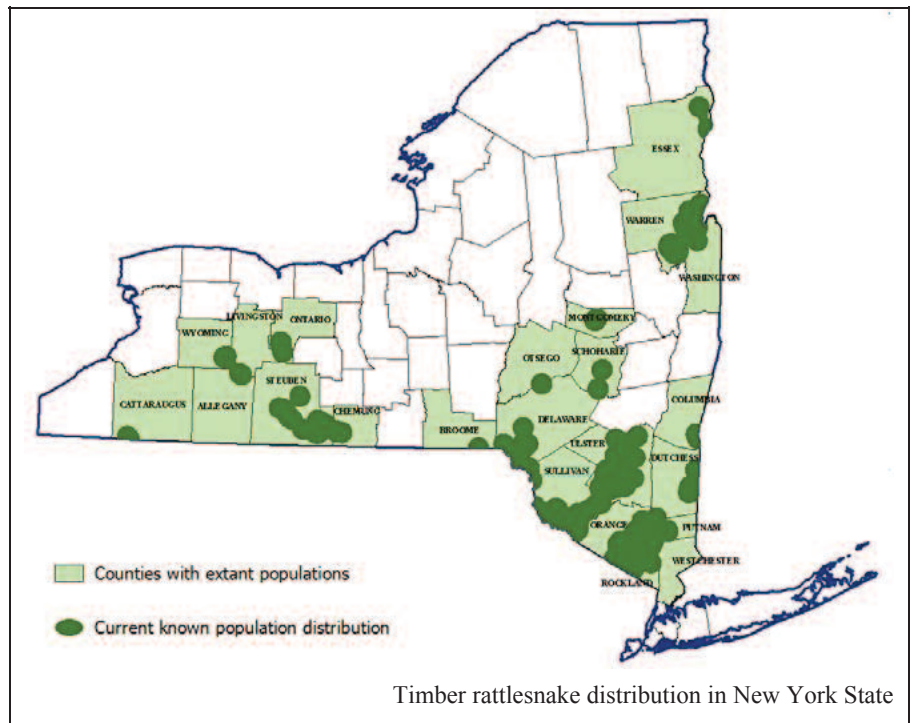
EXHIBIT DEC 1

Guidelines for Reviewing Projects for Potential Impacts to the Timber Rattlesnake



The timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) is listed as a *threatened* species in New York and is protected by Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) section 11-0535 and the New York Code of Rules and Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 182). A permit is required for any proposed project that may result in a “take”, which includes, but is not limited to, adverse modification, degradation or destruction of occupied habitat of any species listed as endangered or threatened pursuant to the above laws and regulations. In New York, timber rattlesnakes are

typically associated with steep-slopes and rocky terrain of deciduous or mixed deciduous/coniferous forest. They are, however, known to use and/or move through a wide variety of land types (e.g. wetlands and early successional habitats) during a typical seasonal activity cycle. In areas where movement is not impeded by artificial barriers (e.g. major roads and urban areas) timber rattlesnakes may migrate three miles or more from their den each summer in search of essential summer habitats (e.g. basking and gestating areas), food, and mating partners. Human-rattlesnake interactions are most likely to occur during the summer and early autumn when movement rates peak and snakes are typically at their maximum distance from the den; in some locations, migration routes may require snakes to pass through residential developments or other areas of intensive land use. Where multiple den sites are clustered in relatively close proximity, areas of potential range overlap between snakes from different dens may be particularly important locations for continued gene flow. Thus, avoiding fragmentation of these areas of genetic exchange is critical for the long-term viability of a local population.



Impact Assessment Requirements

For projects that have been determined to be in close proximity to a known timber rattlesnake den, the project design will need to avoid alteration of suitable habitats and incorporate mitigation measures to prevent impacts to the snakes that would constitute a take under ECL Section 11-0535. Where the landscape will be significantly altered, mitigation is difficult and avoiding impacts may require detailed information about timber rattlesnakes on and around the project site. Therefore, if it has been determined that a potential taking could result from the project, the following information may be required to assess the potential project-related impacts on timber rattlesnakes: 1) habitat assessment [identify all suitable hibernacula, transient habitat, and summer range, 2) site usage, and 3) movement between summer and winter habitats.

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Habitat Assessment

Due to the species' large home range and multiple habitat requirements a habitat assessment (PFBC-NDS, 2004) should be conducted to determine the presence of suitable basking, foraging, gestating and denning habitat or potential travel corridors within the project boundaries. Information collected for each area identified as potentially suitable habitat should include, at minimum, a habitat description and geographic location (i.e. GPS coordinates). Results of the habitat assessment will determine what additional information and/or mitigation may be required. Locations identified as potential habitat will also be used as the primary focus areas of presence-absence surveys, if necessary. Habitat assessments must be conducted by individuals that have knowledge of timber rattlesnake ecology.

Population Surveys

If the project site contains suitable habitat(s), it may be assumed rattlesnakes utilize the site during some stage of their annual cycle and the potential impacts to the species and their habitats should be assessed and mitigation measures (see Mitigation Recommendations) should be incorporated into the project design. If any of the above habitat elements occur on or in close proximity to the project site **AND** usage of the site by timber rattlesnakes will not be assumed, then surveys to detect the presence (e.g. den emergence, basking and gestating habitat searches) and site usage/snake movement (e.g. radio telemetry) should be conducted.

Population surveys (Casper *et al.* 2001) must be conducted during the time when timber rattlesnakes are not hibernating and can be expected to be active. To ensure accurate results, surveys should only be conducted between April 15th and October 31st on days when the air temperatures is 66° F or greater **AND** there is no appreciable precipitation.

To adequately assess the site for the presence (or probable absence) of timber rattlesnakes, each location identified as suitable basking, gestating, or denning habitat or as a potential travel corridor should be visited at least four (4) times within the survey period, and visits to each suitable habitat location should be separated by seven (7) or more days.

Survey to detect the presence of timber rattlesnakes at potential den habitats are confined to the beginning and end of the active season when snakes are most likely to be detected at or near den sites. Thus, two (2) visits per potential den should occur post den emergence between April 15th and May 15th, and an additional two (2) visits per potential den should occur between September 15th and October 25th when the snakes are congregating around dens prior to den ingress for winter hibernation.

The collection of site usage and snake movement data may require telemetric monitoring (via external and/or internal radio transmitters) to record the location and behavior of a representative sample of snakes throughout their annual cycle. In order to assess movement patterns, or to be reasonably certain that rattlesnakes do not use specific areas of a proposed project site, up to three field seasons of data collection may be required (a minimum of two full activity cycles of data are recommended). Contingent upon the data collection requirements of the project, a detailed scope of work should be developed by the project sponsor (in consultation with Department staff) and approved by the Department prior to the initiation of any field work.

All timber rattlesnake population surveys should be conducted by individuals that have knowledge of the species' ecology, and surveys that may involve handling snakes (e.g. marking, radio telemetry) must be conducted by individuals that have experience with such techniques and are licensed by New York State to handle timber rattlesnakes.

EXHIBIT DEC 1

Threats

- Loss and/or degradation of habitat - residential and commercial development and mining operations eliminate available habitat and may degrade that which is not destroyed (e.g. stormwater runoff, use of residential chemicals).
- Persecution and illegal collection - increased human activity in timber rattlesnake habitats increases the potential for snake mortality from intentional killing of snakes by humans. A higher rate of illegal collection (effective mortality) for the pet trade is also often a result of increased human presence near timber rattlesnake populations.
- Fragmentation and road mortality - the species' large home range and a high degree of site fidelity result in timber rattlesnakes typically following the same route each year during long-distance migrations between habitats. Thus, any newly-constructed road that intersects a snake's traditional travel route will become either an impassable barrier to migration or an annual road-mortality hazard.

Mitigation Recommendations

The following is a list of potential mitigation methods that may be used to avoid or minimize certain project-related impacts; however, not all methods are appropriate for all projects.

- Seasonal restrictions

All allowable disturbance activities, including movement of construction vehicles, excavation, and alteration of vegetation, should be conducted during the period when the snakes would be expected to be hibernating and are less likely to be directly impacted by above-ground disturbances. The acceptable work period is November 1st through March 31st.

Habitat management (including timber harvesting) and trail maintenance activities should also be timed to minimize the potential for injury/death of snakes. Habitats that are actively managed (e.g. mowing and prescribed burning) and trailsides that are cleared using a brush hog may increase mortality as snakes are killed by machinery or incinerated by fire (Means and Campbell, 1982b)

In addition to the seasonal restrictions applied to vegetation management practices, disturbance to non-transient habitats should be avoided at **ALL** times. Roads, skid trails and landings should be kept at least 330 feet from all known or potentially suitable basking and gestating habitats, and to minimize the potential for collapse or disturbance of dens, heavy equipment and site preparation work (e.g. disk-harrowing, shearing, root-raking) should be prohibited within 660 feet of any known hibernacula.

- Timber rattlesnake monitor

If any project-related work is to occur (in whole or in part) during April 1st through October 31st, the project sponsor should retain the services of a snake monitor. The snake monitor must be a qualified biologist that has knowledge of timber rattlesnake ecology and relocation procedures. The monitor must also have experience handling rattlesnakes and be licensed by New York State to do so.

The snake monitor should be on site during all construction activities and would be responsible for: 1) conducting reconnaissance surveys for timber rattlesnakes within the work area prior to the initiation of any disturbance activities, and 2) relocating snakes as required.

EXHIBIT DEC 1

➤ Temporary barrier

When disturbance is likely to occur from actions occurring outside of the acceptable work periods, a temporary restrictive (Stechert, 2001) barrier may help to avoid impacts if installed around the perimeter of the disturbance footprint of small projects (< 1 acre). The barrier should be: 1) installed before the end of the acceptable work period and maintained until the end of the construction phase of the project or until the beginning of the next acceptable work period, whichever occurs first, 2) inspected daily and, if necessary, repaired immediately to a fully functional condition*, and 3) constructed in accordance with the following design specifications:

- made of ¼ inch square hardware cloth or wire mesh
- a minimum of 48” high
- anchored into the ground with reinforcement bars placed on the “disturbance side” of the barrier and spaced between 6 – 8 feet apart.
- secured at the base (barrier/ground interface) with at least 6” of fence material covered with soil backfill

* The effectiveness of the barrier will be diminished and snakes may be able to gain access to the disturbance area if debris (e.g. tree limbs, soil) is allowed to overtop or pile up along side of the barrier.

➤ Education

Persecution by humans is a significant source of timber rattlesnake mortality and is thought to be a major contributing factor to the population declines experienced by the species over the past 100 years. Misconceptions about the actual versus perceived threat posed by timber rattlesnakes often leads to the snakes being injured or killed by humans who, when encountering a timber rattlesnake, are fearful of being attacked. Prospective residents in subdivisions located near known den sites should be provided with educational materials that help identify timber rattlesnakes and accurately describe the snakes’ non-aggressive behavior. Educational materials should also include information about the Department’s nuisance rattlesnake relocation program. The subdivision’s prospectus could also be required to disclose the potential for the presence of timber rattlesnakes on the property. Homeowners and local law enforcement agencies should be provided with phone numbers of nuisance rattlesnake responders in the area.

➤ Habitat creation/enhancement

In some locations, natural succession may cause shading-over of hibernacula or essential summer habitats. Such habitat suitability changes, particularly that of gestating and birthing areas, can decrease the long-term viability of the location’s timber rattlesnake population. Vegetation thinning to reclaim the site or the establishment of open stone piles to create escape cover and basking areas may mitigate some of habitat lost to successional changes. In such cases, the development of a site management plan, along with a long-term commitment by the landowner, may more than offset the loss of non-essential habitat resulting from project-related actions.

➤ Herp tunnel

Where roads and highways separate summer and winter habitats, it may be possible to maintain migration corridors via herp tunnels.

EXHIBIT DEC 1

Nuisance Rattlesnake Responders (Region 3): The individuals listed below are qualified and licensed to relocate nuisance rattlesnakes.

Orange County			Sullivan County		
<u>Fort Montgomery</u>			<u>Narrowsburg</u>		
1	Ed McGowen	(845) 446-5916	8	Randy Stechert	(845) 252-3517
<u>Highland Mills</u>			9 Kathy & Tom Michell (845) 252-3501		
2	Bob Savarese	(845) 928-7815			
<u>Warwick</u>			Ulster County		
3	Marty Kupersmith	(845) 986-6235 work (914) 262-3246 cell	<u>New Paltz</u>		
4	David Griggs (ERS Consultants)	(845) 987-1774 work (845) 988-6029 cell	10	Ed Dashnau	(845) 255-4176
5	Tim & Susan Sharko	(845) 988-9369	<u>Woodstock</u>		
			11	Gregory VanBogart	(845) 679-5714
Rockland County			Westchester County		
<u>Pomona</u>			<u>Peekskill</u>		
6	Gene Herskovics	(845) 685-1870 pager	12	Chris Camacho	(914) 584-1088
<u>Spring Valley</u>					
7	John Tarrant (Outragehiss Pets)	(845) 352-4477 work (845) 642-6594 cell			

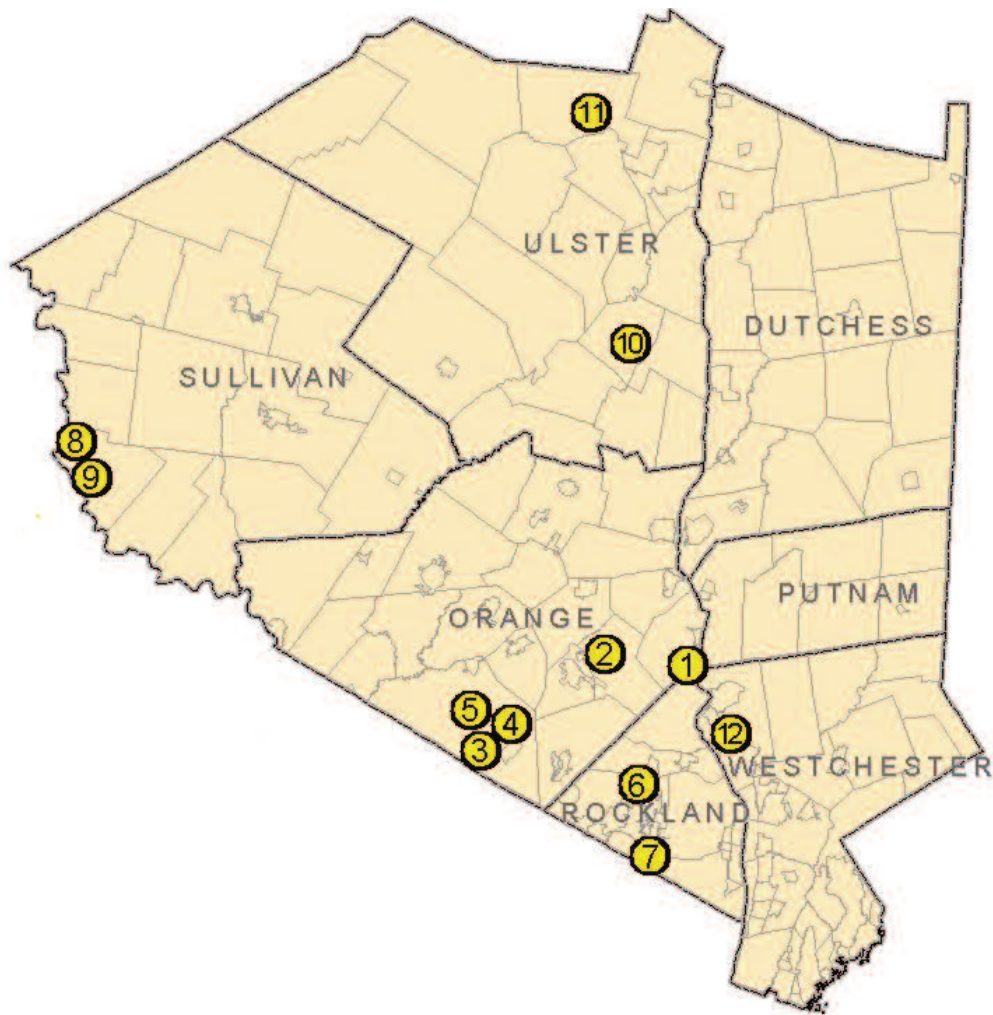


EXHIBIT DEC 1

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- Casper et al. 2001. *Recommended Standard Survey Protocol For the Eastern Massasauga, Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*. Unpublished.
- Means, D. Bruce and Howard W. Campbell. 1982b. Effects of prescribed burning on amphibians and reptiles. Pages 89-97 in G. W. Wood, editor. Prescribed fire and wildlife in Southern forests. Proceedings of a symposium. Belle W. Baruch Forest Science Institute, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, USA.
- PFBC-NDS. 2004. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Natural Diversity Section Timber Rattlesnake Presence-Absence Survey Guidelines (Form-06, revised 3/9/04).
- Stechert, R. 2001. Effectiveness of an experimental timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) exclusion fence at Schunemunk Mountain, Town of Woodbury, Orange County, New York. Report to the Eastern Chapter of the New York Natural Conservancy and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. 23p.

Related Resources and Links**New York Natural Heritage Program**

New York Natural Heritage Program. 2008. Online Conservation Guide for *Crotalus horridus*. Available from: <http://www.acris.nynhp.org/guide.php?id=7536>

NatureServe Explorer

NatureServe. 2009. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>

NYSDEC

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources. 2006. Timber Rattlesnake Fact Sheet. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7147.html>



Bloomington Waste Water Treatment Plant Update

Frank Coviello

— 8/28/25

The BKAA became aware of the discharge of contaminated and/or untreated water into the Shawangunk Kill in January 2024. The discharge was a result of the failure of the bar screen, which is responsible for removing large solids, such as flushable wipes, to prevent them from entering the treatment plant and causing clogs in pipes, pumps, and filters. Further investigation revealed that the bar screen had failed intermittently as far back as summer 2022. Clogs of the filters are especially problematic and require bypass, which results in partially treated sewage without disinfection to be discharged into the Shawangunk Kill. Beginning February 20, 2024, the Bashakill Area Association began a monthly program of testing the water exiting the wastewater treatment plant via the effluent pipe, and discharged into the effluent channel leading to the Shawangunk Kill.

The monthly testing program consisted of collecting water samples directly below the exit of the effluent pipe. Two individual samples were collected, one for the determination of Coliform bacteria and the second for the determination of E. Coli bacteria. All the monthly samples collected from February 20, 2024 through January 6, 2025 produced results greater than 1,000 (most were greater

than 2,000) for Coliform bacteria. The Shawangunk Kill is classified as a Water Quality B. The standard for Quality B requires a monthly geometric mean from a minimum of five samples to be less than 200. For the same period 5 results were greater than 2,000, one result was greater than 1,000 and 4 results were less than 500 for E. Coli bacteria. Current EPA guidelines require less than or equal to 126 for E. Coli.

In March of 2025, a new component, which was custom manufactured, was installed on the bar screen and it has been operational continuously. Beginning April 2, 2025 through August 4, 2025, all Coliform results have been less than 700 and all E. Coli results have been less than 500, a very significant improvement!

Moving forward, at the August 11, 2025 Bloomington Board of Trustees meeting, it was announced that financing for a new replacement bar screen was almost completed but there is currently no estimated time for the completion of this step. Once the replacement has been made a new and more efficient bar screen will be manufactured and installed, but again, there is no estimated time for this. Rest assured the BKAA will continue to monitor this situation.



Cheyenne the Water Woman

Cheyenne Otto

This summer the BKAA had the pleasure of collaborating with high school students enrolled in a college course through the College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The students conducted field work in four locations on the Bashakill. These students collected water quality data using tertiary testing kits and conducted macroinvertebrate surveys to determine which organisms were present in different environmental conditions.

Each location chosen during the surveys had slight variations that may cause slight variations in water quality data and differences in the macroinvertebrates observed. For example, students surveyed an area located down the trail southwest from the boat launch on South Road, which had the presence of pine trees which signify more

acidic soil conditions. In this area, the pH ranged from 6.5-7 which differed from the 7-7.5 pH range at all other locations. Although slight, this variation greatly impacted the diversity of organisms observed as the typical damselfly and dragonfly larvae were not observed. The observations made at this specific location showcase the importance of our water testing program. Slight variations in the water quality have the potential to greatly impact the ecosystem.

Thank you to all of our volunteers and members who continue to support the organization and our water testing program at the Bashakill. If you have any questions or you would like to inquire about volunteering for our water testing program, please reach out to info@thebashakill.com with the subject ATTN: Cheyenne - Water Testing Program for more information.

Deerpark Rural Alliance and NYenvironcom

Grace Woodard

Hello, Fall. This summer has played with our heads, land, and water.

DRA, NYenvironcom, and the Lower Huguenot Neighborhood Alliance postponed our 2nd Neversink River Festival to August 2026 due to family circumstances of our organizing members. We'll be rolling up our sleeves for an October planning pow wow for our Neversink..

Meanwhile, bottle testing continues in the lower Basha Kill, which has yielded new lab results from a tributary flowing out of Dragon Springs adjacent to the Galley Hill Rd Bridge, which entered the lower Basha Kill. The results were through the roof from an area that has had relatively low fecal coliform numbers. This test was hitting 1300 cfu/100ml (7 x the health and safety standard) and sent off our alarm. We informed the DEC. A week later, in that same upper stream, the water flow was cloudy and had an odor, which was captured on video. We're DRA—forever vigilant.

Coming to a head before the Deerpark Planning Board in late August will be a critical meeting with Quarry Management—a final push for site plan extension. The PB has thankfully been pushing back on this reckless and violation-prone project whose objectives remain shifting and dodgy.

DRA and NYenvironcom have 3 more events...2 PJ Markets and the Ulster Co Italian Festival (Oct 11, Kingston). Say hello.

NYenvironcom's WaterInsight program took a hit. The rains were angry with our water monitoring network. Station 5S (PKBK5S) used to stand sentinel at the turn of the Neversink, in the lands of the Nature Conservancy, but for this moment stands no more – gone; washed away. along with the tree it adorned and neighboring trees that experienced the violent potential of the usually tranquil Neversink. You will be missed 5S (version 1), your years of service not forgotten.

Meanwhile, a new phase of the program is being planned with new stations —two of them—to be installed along the Wallkill River. The first we will have in the Hudson River Watershed. More on this soon.

And as part of his work for the OSI McHenry Award, Bobby Howe has begun mapping the Wallkill River. Terrific.

Also, check this out: If you have any views or run-ins with Harmful Algal Blooms (HABS) in the Wallkill, take this survey. This data will add to the HAB tools that will be part of the mapping dataset.

The verdict is still out on our Clean Water Act Appeal (from March 20th). With the business of litigation booming in our current national circumstances, it's hard to keep our place in line in the docket. The oral arguments are still here to be listened to if you need a refresher. Stay posted for when the decision comes in.

And, of course, our GoFundMe goes on, for those who prefer to show their support monetarily.

Tell A Friend About the Basha Kill Area Association

Fill out this coupon for membership or more information:

Mail to: P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790

_____ \$10 per membership _____ Other Donation _____ Prefer mailed newsletter (Not available to seasonal residents due to forwarding costs)
 _____ \$20 Family Membership (every family member aged 14 years and older holds voting rights)

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Email (required) _____

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