

## Ways & Means Committee Special Meeting Minutes

**DATE & TIME:** November 15, 2022 – 1:00 PM  
**LOCATION:** Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor, County Office Building  
**PRESIDING OFFICER:** Chair John Gavaris  
**LEGISLATIVE STAFF:** Amber Feaster & Natalie Kelder, Legislative Financial Analyst  
**PRESENT:** Legislators Brian Cahill (arrived 1:06), Dean Fabiano, Ken Ronk, Eve Walter (arrived 1:27), and Legislative Chair Tracey Bartels  
**ABSENT:** None  
**QUORUM PRESENT:** Yes

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Legislators Phil Erner, Manna Jo Greene, Chris Hewitt, Joseph Maloney Kathy Nolan, Laura Petit, Eric Stewart, Abe Uchitelle; Clerk of the Legislature Fabella; Deputy County Executive Kelly; Comptroller Gallagher & Deputy Comptroller DeMarco – UC Comptroller’s Office; Commissioner Gulnick, Deputy Budget Director Quesnell and Accountant Sweeney - Department of Finance; Director Juras- Budget and Innovation; Director Erichsen – Emergency Management; Commissioner Dittus and Commissioner Quigley, Jen Fuentes and Keri Williams - Board of Elections; Pamela Herrick, Ulster County Historical Society; Emily Vail, Hudson River Watershed Alliance; Tanya Garment

Chairman Gavaris called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM

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Chair Gavaris introduced legislators and department heads to discuss their 2023 County Executive Recommended Budget amendment requests:

### Legislator Uchitelle

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 1: 2023 Periodic Compensation Recommendation** – this amendment supports the adoption of the recommendations of the independent Periodic Compensation Review Committee (PCRC).

Legislator Maloney questions the PCRC recommendations and suggested waiting for a salary study of all county employees.

Comptroller Gallagher noted for the record that her office prepared a series of analyses for the PCRC that noted that several elected officials have not received a salary increase since 2005 (County Clerk) and 2009 and offered a comparison of these positions with other counties in the region.

Legislator Uchitelle shared an analysis that was prepared by Legislative staff that also demonstrated this disparity.

Comptroller Gallagher pointed out that if the salary increase doesn’t take effect until the next election for that official both the County Clerk and the Comptroller will not see an increase until 2026. She also noted that even with these salary increases there will still be some compression such as deputies in the Sheriff’s Department that make more than the Sheriff.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 2: Landlord Ambassador Program** – This amendment would allow the Planning Department to contract for the facilitation of the

Landlord Ambassador Program. The Landlord Ambassador Program will assist landlords and struggling tenants within our geographical region by striving to improve the quality of rental housing while keeping rents affordable. The Program will be conducted under the following terms: The Agency will be required to offer per unit support of up to \$15,000; 7 years of affordability will be required for the range of \$10,000-\$15,000 of support per unit; 5 years of affordability will be required for the range of \$5,000-\$10,000 of support per unit, 3 years of affordability will be required for per-unit levels of support of \$5,000 and below. A matching length property maintenance declaration must be executed, and a matching lien must be recorded. Assistance funds may only be used for the following categories: repairs to rental units, accessibility upgrades, energy efficiency upgrades, fiscal distress, and reimbursement for back rent. Only landlords with 9 or fewer rental units will be eligible. Assisted landlords will sign affordable rental agreements stipulating rents will remain affordable to households at or below 80% of AMI and will not evict tenants unless for cause and will maintain each rental unit in good repair and habitability or be at risk for recapture of assistance.

Legislator Cahill questioned how this would be coordinated with local municipalities. He was also concerned that the program would not address the neglect of the landlord that required the improvements in the first place and how it could address landlords who continue this neglectful behavior going forward.

Legislators discussed various concerns and aspects of how this program might be implemented.

#### **Legislator Hewitt**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 3: Human Rights** – this amendment proposed an increase in the fuel line from \$1500. 00 to \$5000.00 to reimburse the 11 Human Rights Commissioners for mileage, meals and other small things.

Legislative Chair Bartels was concerned about extending reimbursement to this Commission made up of volunteers noting the county had dozens of volunteers serving on board and commissions that are not reimbursed in any way.

Legislator Ronk said he would consider reimbursement for mileage but not food or other things.

Legislators discussed the possibility of having a wider conversation regarding reimbursement for boards and commissions and how the Human Rights Commission can do outreach to ensure the public understands the services available;

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 4: Stipend Pay** – To provide \$2,400.00 to each Legislator to strengthen the abilities of the Legislative leaders to serve and inform their constituents by providing for the following allowable expenditures: Costs related to organizing community town halls; Subcontracting services such as assistants and catering; Value-aligned purchases such as recycled paper; Emergency needs fulfillment such as taxi rides for constituents and short-term document storage; And other connected and necessary expenditures incurred in the performance of Legislative duties

Legislator Maloney suggested other conversations need to happen and suggested a discussion regarding adding more legislative staff, giving legislators access to other county office resources or reducing the size of the legislature.

Legislator Walter observed that different legislators operate in different ways and centralizing the support in the legislative office is the fairest approach. She suggested that the issue is more about identifying a need from our legislative office and then fulfilling the need. She also noted the work of an intern earlier this year and said she could work with other legislators who were interested in using an intern.

Legislative Chair Bartels was not sure how such a stipend could be paid out or accounted for.

Legislator Fabiano did not think a stipend was a good idea and would annoy taxpayers. In his 17+ years on the legislature the staff has fulfilled requests for anything he needed. He could support more staff in the legislative office.

Legislator Hewitt was not sure what he was allowed to ask staff to do and suggested that perhaps more training for new legislators was needed.

### **Legislator Stewart**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 5: Hudson River Watershed Alliance** – This amendment assigns funding to the Hudson River Watershed Alliance (HRWA) which is a 501(c)3 nonprofit Organization who works with 32 local watershed groups region-wide and whose mission is to unite and empower communities to protect their local water resources by supporting local watershed groups, helping communities work together on water issues, and communicating through a collective voice. This funding would cover a contractual agreement with HRWA to:
  - 1) develop an Action Plan for the Rondout Creek Watershed Alliance, with short-term next steps to move toward identified goals;
  - 2) Organize a Rondout Creek Summit to share updates and information with watershed stakeholders;
  - 3) Update communications materials to improve outreach, including building a web presence through the Organization's website and social media; and
  - 4) facilitate the finalization and formalization of an Organizational structure for the Rondout Creek Watershed Alliance to best achieve its mission.

Legislator Stewart introduced Emily Val , Executive Director of HRWA who gave additional detail about the groups support to unite and empower communities to protect shared water resources and work on an action plan and explained they are looking for a fiscal sponsor to support these countywide efforts.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 6: Historical Society Mentorship Program** – This amendment assigns funding to the Ulster County Historical Society for their mentorship program for students and volunteers looking to gain curatorial / administrative experience at the Bevier House Museum in Kingston (Town of Marbletown). The purpose of the program is to provide an introduction to and entry-level skills in development and communications, public programming and exhibitions, fiscal management, member services and volunteer programs in a non-profit cultural organization. The Historical Society sees this Training and Mentorship Program as another means to serve our community and as an opportunity to see our mission from a mentee's perspective as we work to share the history of Ulster County's many communities.

Legislator Stewart introduced Pamela Herrick, the new Director. She described her role as a part-time position and how this program is envisioned as an opportunity for students to learn how to effectively administer a cultural not for profit origination.

Legislator Ronk asked if they have explored other sources of revenue before coming to the County, or if they have they reached out to colleges or BOCES or the Dorsky Museum in New Paltz

Ms. Herrick said they have done other fundraising and received \$500 from the Jim Kaplan Fund but this is the first ask like this. She is speaking tithe BOCES, the community college faith group leaders to support this effort.

Legislator Nolan suggested that this could be a PILOT project for a mentorship program. She suggested that there are many organizations that could fund this type of work.

#### **Commissioner of Finance Gulnick**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 7: CIP Open Space & Affordable Housing** –There are no financial changes for these amendments. Both the projects listed above will have the term “Fund” removed from their name and replaced with “Program”. All descriptions of the project will reflect a similar change if applicable.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 8: CIP Community Dev. Program Language** –There are no financial changes for this amendment. The project description will be amended to strike the sentence: “This Program is designed to assist communities that wish to invest in initiatives that benefit their community and advance County goals as provided for in the County’s adopted plans and policies and/or as directed by policy initiatives of the Legislature in cooperation with the Executive Branch.” And to add the sentence “This Program is designed to assist communities/ municipalities that wish to invest in initiatives that benefit their community/municipality and advance County goals as provided for in the County’s adopted plans and policies and/or as directed by policy initiatives of the Legislature in cooperation with the Executive Branch.”
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 9: CIP Storage & Warehouse Facility** –This amendment is to move construction cost for the above project into 2024. Construction was originally listed as 2023.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 10: CIP Gov't Operations Center** - This amendment is to move construction cost for the above project into 2024 and 2025. Construction was originally listed as 2025 and 2026.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 11: CIP Roof Replacement Program** – There are no financial changes for this amendment. In the project description the following needs to be stricken as shown, “To date expenses are 1 million dollars in design and 900 thousand dollars in construction”
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 12: CIP Trudy Resnick Farber Building Repairs** - There are no financial changes for this amendment. In the project description the following needs to be added as shown, “In house labor is to be used for a portion of the work.”



- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 13: CIP UCAT Facility Modernization** – There are no financial changes for this amendment. In the project description the word “overtime” needs to be stricken and replaced with “Over time”.

Legislative Chair Bartels expressed concerns about the capital programs and the practice of the Executive’s staff simply saying “Well, you approved this project in the Capital Program.” Looking back at the Capital Program for the years 2016-2021, she noted that some projects were completed, and some were not in part because neither the Executive or the Legislature brought forward the policy or program behind it. She went on to detail concerns that based on this Capital Program the county could face an explosion of debt service. She plans to introduce some policies to ensure a real time conversation and evaluation of actual Capital projects occurs.

Legislator Maloney shared her concerns about the Capital program being seen as a “wish list” and his frustration with using generic descriptions of major projects or tracking the status of Capital Projects. He agrees priorities need to be established and projects need to be tracked better.

Legislator Cahill discussed the potential impact of the ongoing space study. He anticipates it will offer suggestions options to relocate staff and make other efficiencies. He would rather see money allocated for things the County actually will have to deal with in the next two or three years than something that we hope we can get to, at some point down the road.

Legislator Nolan wanted to keep in mind that having a project conceptually in a document provides a placeholder when funding becomes available. She agreed it would be helpful to have a way to easily identify the status of various capital projects and suggested a color code for projects as they are move from conceptual ideals to detail design to implementation.

A discussion of project management and tracking them ensued.

#### **Comptroller Gallagher**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 14: Comptroller Personnel** – Adjusting salary of Confidential Secretary to more align with similar positions in County to avg of Exec, Finance, Personnel, Clerk Conf. Secretary for a starting rate of \$33.93/hr Adjusting salary of DIAC, which supervises Auditors and Sr. Auditors to equivalent of 2 grades higher than CSEA emp Sr. Auditors at 7.5hrs per day for a starting rate of \$46.59/hr Adjusting salary of the Deputy Comptroller to compare with other Deputies in Finance Office at rate of \$53.95/hr.

Legislator Ronk discussed compression issues. He would not support increasing the salary *AND* reclassifying a management position as a civil service position.

Gallagher said she did a comparison of salaries of these positions in neighboring counties. She noted that as with any staff that works at the pleasure of an elected officials, half of her staff leave whenever a new comptroller is elected, and this can hurt the office’s productivity for taxpayers. Making the position civil service could improve continuity of the office.

Legislative Chair Bartels asked if the Legislature approved the increase in the Deputy’s salary Comptroller still intended make it civil service. Gallagher said she could advertise the position to see what candidates they find.

Legislator discussed the benefits of the Comptroller having the flexibility to hire who she wants vs. only the top 3 civil service candidates, qualification for the positions and a potential residency requirement for higher paying positions.

### **Legislator Walter**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 15: Centralized Arraignment** – Identified as a priority by the Legislative Criminal Justice Task Force, the Ulster County magistrate’s association and the New York Offices of Court Administration and Indigent Legal Services, Ulster County will be transitioning to join dozens of other Counties in New York to offer centralized arraignment during off-court hours. The funding for this was primarily included in the 2023 Executive Recommended Budget. However, this amendment adds: 1) Stipend payments for court Clerks to support the off-hour arraignments which includes two part time positions at 28 hours a week for a base stipend of \$20,000 / year / clerk; 2) A contractual agreement for Taxi / Transportation services for individuals who need transportation to prevent municipal law enforcement from having to remain in the centralized court to provide such services; and 3) Other additional administrative costs. Some costs may be reimbursable by OILS in the future.

Legislator Walter gave a detailed explanation of how the program works.

Legislators asked for some clarifications, how smaller municipal police departments would transport people to and from arraignments, how the program is implemented in other counties, how it will impact staffing for Sheriff, DA and Public Defender, how it will impact local judges and police agencies and how it will impact individuals being arraigned.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 16: Centralized Grants Unit** – This funding is for a grants unit and includes two new positions. The Grant Coordinator will identify funding opportunities for the Executive's Office and County Departments and lead or assist in the grant development and submission. The Grant Administrator will administer or assist Department Heads in the administration of grants received to assure deliverables to the funder during the grant timeline. It is expected that all grants will include a 20% indirect to cover these positions and that there is a minimum of ten submissions per year, five accepted submissions per year, at a minimum of \$200,000 per grant resulting in an indirect revenue of \$200,000.

Legislators discussed that while some departments have success obtaining grants, many grant opportunities are missed.

Legislator Maloney expressed concern that some centralized services are well known to all staff and asked how to ensure that every department has access to this grant writer.

Legislator Walter noted that some departments have regular access to well established grant opportunities and have staff to manage that process. She envisions this grant writer searching out and writing proposals for grants the county is missing out on. She also noted that this grant writer may even be able to find ways for two different departments to work together on a grant program.

Deputy Executive Kelly explained that there are dozens of New York State consolidated funding programs that the County could be eligible for and should be applying for but has not had the “bandwidth” or a coordinating entity. He noted there are other Federal and outside grant opportunities, we are missing.

Legislators discussed tracking deliverables, legacy costs and sunset clauses, potential of grant funding covering administrative costs/salary, potential to offer additional services and working with municipalities on intermunicipal grant opportunities.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 17: New Hire Raises** – This amendment removes the Executive Recommended Non-Union increase of 2.5% for non-union positions which are vacant or are filled with individuals hired on or after August 1, 2022.

Legislators discussed compression as union positions receive regular negotiated raises while management has not seen the same increase and even given up benefits over time, impacts of the rising cost-of-living and inflation, applying this policy position by position, and how to ensure equity.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 18: Office for the Aging** – The Office for the Aging has long spoken of the extensive waitlist of seniors needing care management and home health aides. Further, there is an effort to move more positions such as these in-house to assure reasonable pay and benefits as these individuals serve among our most vulnerable. This amendment will add one more full time Case Manager to the one they are currently budgeted for and will add three more full time Home Health Aides to meet the current waiting list needs.

Legislators discussed providers of home health aides are struggling to find workers, poor pay scale of home health aides, and in-house aides vs. contracting aides through outside agencies.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 19: Technical - Eviction Services** – This services as a technical amendment in response to the adoption of Resolution No. 498 of 2022 - Approving the Execution of a Contract for \$221,430.60 Entered Into By The County - Legal Services Of The Hudson Valley - Department of Social Services.

#### **Legislator Ronk**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 20: Emergency Management** – This amendment will create a Deputy Director of Emergency Management for EMS and create an assistant EMS coordinator, battalion coordinator and several paramedics. It was a recommendation of the EMS Taskforce and envisioned to foster more interagency cooperation and training. It would also pay part of the cost for a “fly car” system in 4 zones around the county to provide a paramedic when ambulances are not immediately available.

Legislator Ronk detailed the issues impacting EMS services and the real life-threatening crisis this lack of service has created. He recognizes that this is not a problem the county can solve alone but could be an important part of the solution.

Director Erichsen described the current EMS and Fire agency make up within the county and statistics of their response times, capability and staffing problems. He explained that State law requires two people in the ambulance and often they cannot take the call because a second volunteer is not available. He would locate the “fly cars” in historic hot spots, and those paramedics could provide critical care and meet with an ambulance and driver to transport the patient if only a driver is available.

Legislators discussed the current volunteer and paid mobile life support in various areas around the county, transport calls vs. emergency calls, skyrocketing cost of providing service, stagnate insurance reimbursement, details of how “fly cars” are equipped and would be organized, fire departments that respond to emergency calls and the importance having a Deputy Director to coordinate these limited assets.

## Chair Gavaris

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 21: Quality Analyst** – This Amendment creates a Quality Analysts position within the Clerk of the Legislative Board's office. This position would measure, evaluate, and report the effectiveness and efficiency of various County funded initiatives. This insight will assist the Legislature in determining if desired outcomes are being achieved and will help to direct future funding.

Legislator Maloney supported the concept and suggested starting with a survey of county residents to see what services they need. He noted that the county offers services that are not well publicized.

Chair Gavaris agreed discussing how his hospital utilizes surveys to scrutinize patient satisfaction and determine where they are missing their goals and where they are doing well.

Legislators discussed how to do a survey, the new constituent services hotline, and the need for very clear deliverables in county contracts.

Comptroller Gallagher noted her role in the Charter gives her the responsibility to scrutinizing contract agencies. She would welcome an additional staff person to provide this analyses and dive more deeply into the 792 contracts her office approves annually but she could not support the position outside of the auditor's office. She also warned that analyzing all of the county contracts each year would be too much to expect of one person.

A discussion ensued about what department would be most appropriate for this position and what department legislators would approve for it. Legislators would want to be able to direct the work.

A discussion ensued.

## Legislator Greene

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 22: Legislative Tech Support** – This amendment creates a Legislative Technical Support position within the Clerk of the Legislative Board's office. This position will be responsible for, but not limited to, managing office software and hardware needs, liaising with the county's IS department, providing support to Legislators on county issued hardware, software and during legislative meetings.

Legislator Greene reminded her colleagues that telecommuting is an important climate solution. She noted the using Zoom meetings during COVID allowed people to participate without driving a long distance. She reported that the work of the Climate Smart Committee flourished with 20 to 30 people attending Zoom meetings and when meetings returned to in-person only, participation dropped to single digits. She agreed that committee members should meet in-person but advocated that the public should have the option to be in-person or attend remotely.

Legislator Maloney supported the position and added that this individual could also help improve the Legislature's website and overall online presence.

Legislator Cahill noted that with the restrictive rules for open meetings being in-person, this would really be to facilitate public participation. He felt that some of the other duties listed in the description could be done by IS and this individual could coordinate services with them.

A discussion ensued.

## **Legislative Chair Bartels**

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 23: Board of Elections** – This amendment moves the Commissioners of the Board of Elections and the Deputy Commissioners of the Board of Elections from a 75-hour standard work week to an 80-hour standard work week

Legislators discussed that Department Heads don't clock in and out, so it is a salary increase for them.

Legislator Ronk said he could support a salary increase for lower level BOE employees and recognized that both of the current Commissioners are experienced but was concerned that the Commissioners are the only county employees who are employed solely on the recommendation of political parties and not necessarily from experience.

Chair Bartels discussed an amendment she will bring forward tomorrow but thought the Commissioners could speak about today. Both Commissioners requested a salary increase for a technical position that was new to the BOE. She noted recent changes in election law and an election cycle schedule that has almost year-round components.

Commissioner Quigley explained that they were fortunate to get overqualified individuals in the new "clerk" position and described their roles.

Commissioner Dittus addressed the comp time issue and detailed the excessive overtime the Deputy Commissioners earned in excess of the 105-hour ceiling for comp time. While they force the Deputies to take time off once they reach this ceiling, statutory deadlines make that impossible at times.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 24: Conf Sec Budget** – This amendment transfers the Confidential Secretary for the Budget Office to the Executive Office.

Deputy Executive Kelly felt the description does not reflect the actual duties of the position, requested time to provide the job description and the actual work being performed.

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## **New Business**

**Legislator Maloney** may not be able to attend the budget meetings on November 16 because one of his children is scheduled for surgery. He discussed concerns about several upcoming amendments being offered at that meeting. There would be legislators present to address some of his concerns, but he wanted to discuss some tonight

- **ARPA Team**

Legislator Maloney was disappointed with the ARPA team and felt the Legislature did not get what they were expecting. He was getting all of his information from other staff and suggested moving these individuals of the ARPA team. into one of the proposed new positions and eliminating the ARPA Team.

Deputy Executive Kelly explained that these positions are managing the ARPA financing and making the mandated reports. In addition, they are facilitating applications, preparing contracts, interacting with applicants for close to \$30 million in projects.

Legislative Chair Bartels recalled that she was initially questioned hiring 3 individuals but In light of she thinks the staffing is appropriate.

A discussion ensued regarding the time limits for the ARPA funds being short and the Legislature is moving very fast; the requirements to manage the funding and the upcoming needs to administer the non-profit, agriculture and small business grants; duplications of services and other ways to combine responsibilities and cut positions; concerns that municipalities and non-profits are still waiting to hear if they will receive ARPS funding through these programs; current status of awards to municipalities and non-profits and other details of the ARPA funding.

- **Tourism vs. Housing**

Legislator Maloney speculated that the success of Tourism programs is have a significant negative impact on housing and noted that 75-90% of Ulster Count tourists are staying in someone's former home or apartment. He suggested cutting tourism spending for one year to see if it has an impact on housing. He suggested the Tourism department should be guarding against certain aspects of tourism. He noted that while Ulster County Economic Development sites a lack of affordable housing is contributing to a lack of manufacturing and industrial jobs, Ulster County is paying out-of-state companies a couple of grand a year to print pamphlets inviting folks to vacation here.

Legislator Cahill said that could only work if other counties in the region did the same thing and applauded the great work of Ulster County Tourism. He questioned the statement that "75-90% of tourist. Are staying in someone's former home or apartment" and asked where Legislator Maloney got that figure.

A discussion ensued.

- **Deputy Executive and Deputy Executive Assistant**

Legislator Maloney noted that Ulster County has historically had three Deputy Executives and Deputy Executive Assistants. He made a comparison to Dutchess county who has less Deputy Executive and Assistant staffing. He remarked that Ulster County has been able to function while several of these positions were vacant and it might be a good time to eliminate some of the Deputies and/or Assistants.

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Chairman Gavaris asked if there was any old or new business. Hearing none:

**Adjournment**

Motion Made By: Legislator Ronk  
Motion Seconded By: Legislative Chair Bartels

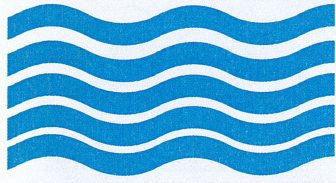
No. of Votes in Favor: 6  
No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 4:46 PM

Respectfully submitted: Natalie Kelder  
Minutes Prepared by: Fawn Tantillo  
Minutes Approved: December 13, 2022



# Hudson River Watershed Alliance



## What is a Watershed?

A watershed is the area of land from which water drains into a river, stream, or other waterbody. Water flows off the land into a waterbody by way of rivulets, streams, and eventually rivers, and underground through groundwater aquifers. Watersheds are defined by the lay of the land, with mountains and hills typically forming their borders. Watershed boundaries rarely match state, county, or municipal boundaries. Every watershed is unique due to its combination of geology, wildlife, vegetation, climate, development, and history.

## Why Take a Watershed Approach to Our Work?

The Hudson River watershed, from Lake Tear of the Clouds in the Adirondacks to New York City, covers 13,400 square miles. Each stream that flows to the Hudson is connected to the health of the river, as is each community that is connected to the Hudson River directly or through its vast network of streams and tributaries. The large Hudson River watershed can also be broken down into smaller watersheds, to better align with issues or make management more feasible.

To protect and improve the health of the Hudson River and its ecosystem, we must take a watershed approach. This allows Hudson River Watershed Alliance and other watershed stewards to partner and work across city, town, and county lines with our thinking, planning, decision-making, and projects. When we have a specific water quality or flooding problem, we can look to the watershed to better understand the issue and potential solutions. A watershed approach also allows us to consider and integrate water-related social and environmental justice issues that are sometimes overlooked when a narrower approach to a problem is taken.

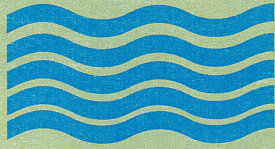


Hudson River Watershed Alliance works across the Hudson River watershed to support watershed groups, help communities work together on water issues, and communicate as a collective voice. Hudson River Watershed Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Hudson River Watershed Alliance acknowledges that the Hudson River watershed includes the traditional land of indigenous people, including the Munsee Lenape, Wappinger, Mohican, Schaghticoke, Abenaki, Haudenosaunee, Oneida, and Mohawk, whose relationship to the land and water is mutually sustaining and built around the recognition that humans are part of nature, not separate from it.



## Hudson River Watershed Alliance



**Vision** We envision a healthy Hudson River watershed and communities that support the watershed with meaningful and lasting environmental stewardship.

Watershed groups from the Adirondacks to New York City are empowered and respected voices that confidently advocate for healthy watersheds. Residents and visitors understand their connection to the Hudson River and local streams. Community leaders understand the significance of the watershed and the impacts of their decisions on it. Hudson River Watershed Alliance serves as a knowledgeable and trusted ally that supports watershed champions and their efforts towards watershed health and environmental justice.

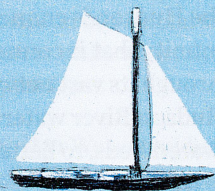
**Goal 1:** The Alliance supports watershed groups' planning and leadership development and building their core strengths and skills through programming that is responsive to their needs.

The Alliance is a respected leader that strengthens watershed groups and helps connect groups and water champions to partners in the Hudson River watershed. Using a variety of methods, the Alliance supports a network of engaged people and long-standing and emerging watershed groups that are working together to protect and improve watershed health in their communities. By providing support, tools, and training, the Alliance supports their capacity for growth and success.



## Mission

# Hudson River Watershed Alliance unites and empowers



**Goal 4:** The Alliance advances the integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, environmental and social justice (DEIJ), and becomes a trusted ally for watershed champions working towards their own DEIJ efforts.

The Alliance promotes diversity of thought, experience, and composition on its board and staff, and supports programs and collaborations where different perspectives are encouraged and welcomed. Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice is critical to achieving our goals of clean water and healthy tributaries in the Hudson River watershed. We can't find solutions to the complex and intertwined problems of water pollution, climate change, and racism without working together as a community.

**Goal 5:** The Alliance communicates as a collective voice for watershed management across the Hudson River Valley, while respecting and supporting the identities and needs of individual watershed communities.

For over a decade, the Alliance has played a foundational role in promoting watershed management. Many watershed groups and champions rely on the Alliance as a trusted guide to issues, policies and opportunities. The Alliance plays an important role as a connector of grassroots groups to state- and regional-level decision-makers. We strive to be a thought leader that uses our integrated viewpoint and partnerships to elevate watershed-wide needs and successes while respecting individuality and supporting the voices of watershed communities.



**Goal 2:** The Alliance advances meaningful integration of watershed community values, planning, and implementation across regional and municipal boundaries.

Regulatory structures, zoning, historic practices, and cultural norms can result in siloed and cross-purposed approaches to watershed planning and protection. These challenges exist across watershed boundaries at state, regional, and local scales. The Alliance aims to lead and increase community awareness and incorporation of cross-municipal and regional watershed approaches to planning, zoning, and other legal and regulatory frameworks.

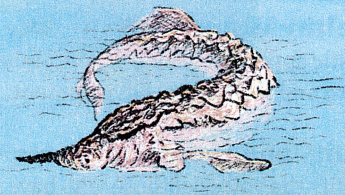


**Goal 3:** The Alliance supports watershed communities planning for and responding to climate change.

The Alliance recognizes the critical need for watershed-based thinking, planning, and actions to be incorporated into climate planning at local, regional, and state levels. The Alliance focuses on climate change impacts to water and watersheds, which may include flooding, water quality, harmful algal blooms, source water protection, infrastructure, and other topics that would benefit from a watershed-based approach to problem-solving.



empowers communities to protect our shared waters.



**Goal 6:** The Alliance increases organizational capacity, consistent with mission, vision and values, in order to achieve the goals outlined in this strategic plan.

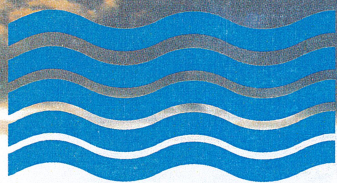
The Alliance strives to embody its Core Values through its everyday practices and procedures to embody excellence in nonprofit organizational culture and to align its administrative activities with the broader goals of this Strategic Plan.



**HRWA Strategic Plan 2022**



# Hudson River Watershed Alliance



## Core Values

**Healthy Watersheds:** We value a sustainable and holistic approach to healthy watersheds that support public health and the natural environment.

**Equity and Inclusion:** We respect and strive to amplify the voices of those who have traditionally been excluded from water conservation and environmental decision-making.

**Interdependence:** We recognize that past, present, and future people depend on and are integrated with the Hudson River watershed for its many values.

**Collaboration:** We believe the Hudson River watershed and our communities will have a better future if we focus on our similarities and acknowledge our differences while we work together to address watershed-based problems.

**Integrity:** We are guided by honesty and ethical principles, and we strive to be a trusted resource and partner for watershed groups, government agencies, and peer organizations.

**Growth through Knowledge:** We value and trust different forms of knowledge and science to guide our work, and we recognize opportunity for growth in both success and failure of our undertakings.

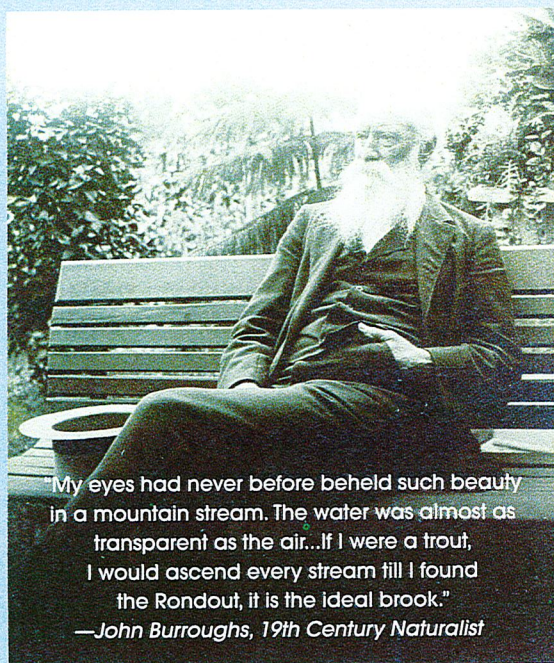
## PROCESS

The strategic plan represents the Hudson River Watershed Alliance's mission, vision for the future, and our core values. It also lays out our strategic goals and the actions we will take to achieve our mission. This strategic planning process was conducted in 2021–2022, including a scenario planning workshop in September 2021. It built on prior internal planning and incorporated outcomes from the Alliance's 2022 *Watershed Needs Assessment*. The process was facilitated by Common Ground Consulting with full participation from the board of directors and staff.

## CONTACT

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[@HudsonRiverWatershedAlliance](https://www.instagram.com/HudsonRiverWatershedAlliance)





"My eyes had never before beheld such beauty in a mountain stream. The water was almost as transparent as the air...If I were a trout, I would ascend every stream till I found the Rondout, it is the ideal brook."

—John Burroughs, 19th Century Naturalist

Photo courtesy of Hartwick College, Stevens-German Library.

The Munsee, the "Totem Wolf Clan" of the Lenape people, who originally inhabited the watershed, called the creek Kahaksink, "place of wild geese." In the 1600s it was given its current name for the redoubt, or fort (*reduyt* in Dutch), near the mouth of the creek.

The Rondout Creek became economically important in the 19th Century when the Delaware & Hudson (D&H) Canal was built to carry coal from Pennsylvania to NYC. The canal ran alongside the creek to Kingston. Today the Rondout is part of NYC's drinking water supply, and it is noted for its biological diversity, fishing, boating, and other recreational activities.

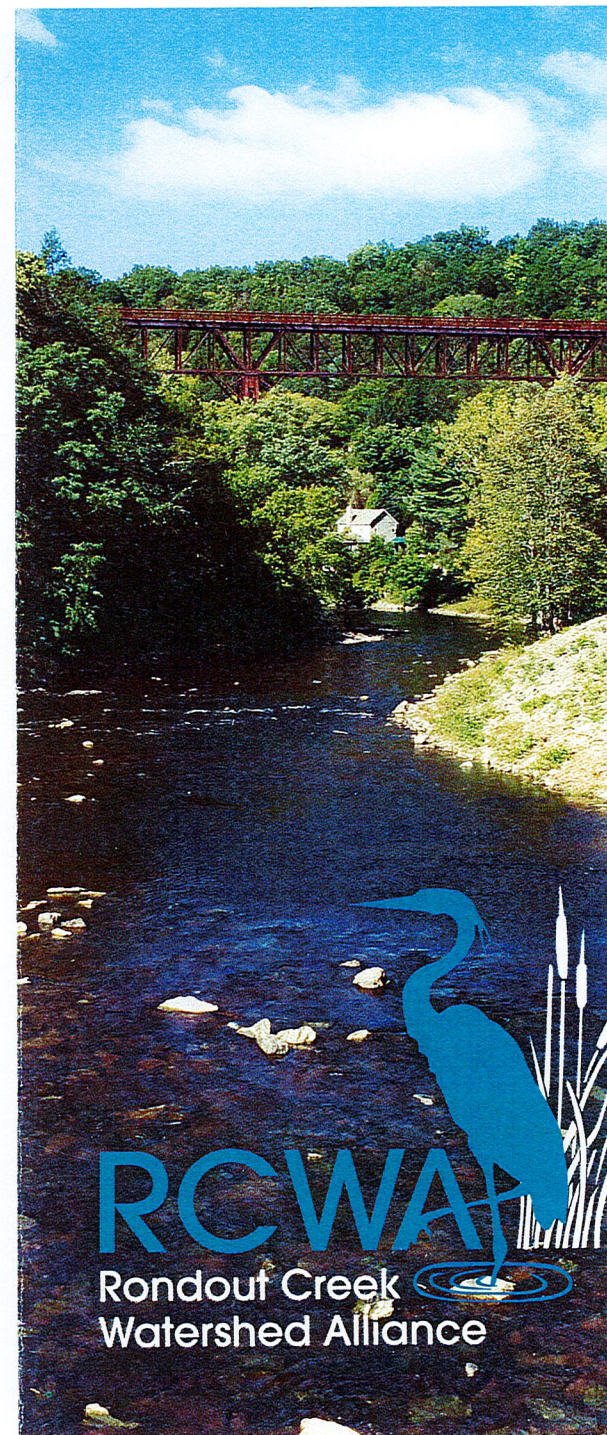


## OUR MISSION

The Rondout Creek Watershed Alliance (RCWA) was founded to restore the Rondout Creek (Kahaksink) and its tributaries, to act as the voice of the creek, and to advocate for the protection and improvement of the watershed by increasing community awareness and implementing collaborative conservation efforts.

Healthy, natural systems act as green infrastructure, supplying services that support life. They help purify drinking water, control floodwaters, replenish aquifers, pollinate crops, and create fertile soil. They also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental education and research, and help us adapt to a changing climate.

For all of the beauty throughout the watershed, the water quality is consistently compromised. Learn what you can do to help. Please visit us at [RondoutCreekWatershedAlliance.org](http://RondoutCreekWatershedAlliance.org) or like us on Facebook.





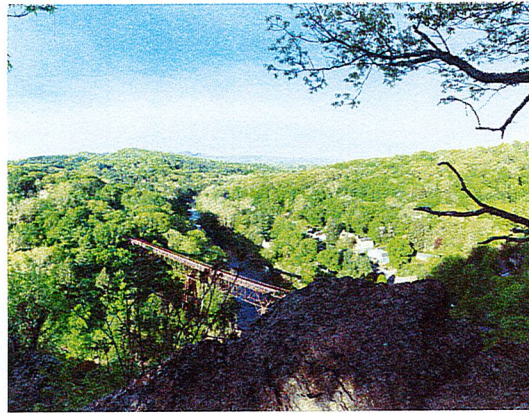
## THE WATERSHED

The Rondout Creek watershed consists of distinct segments: the non-tidal creek which includes the Rondout Reservoir and the tidal portion. It has a diverse and abundant natural heritage, with species and ecological communities of regional, state, and global significance. These natural systems are the scenery and living fabric that provide a regional identity, creating a sense of place for its residents.

The creek and its sister, the Wallkill River, drain a vast area of more than 1,100 square miles, stretching from the Catskills in the north and west to Sussex County, New Jersey in the south. Together, the Rondout and Wallkill form one of the Hudson River's largest tributaries.



Great Rondout Wetlands: The Great Pacama Vly, Cedar Swamp, and Beer Kill Wetlands / Cape Pond in Marletown, Olive, Rochester, and Wawarsing contain unique or rare species or ecological communities, and most are surrounded by extensive forest that serves as an important buffer. In some cases, these large wetland and forest complexes provide a critical connection of natural habitat between the Catskills and Shawangunk mountains.



Karst Aquifer Region: Characterized by caves, sinkholes, mines, springs, lakes, and sinking streams, the karst region is situated in a narrow band of carbonate rock underlying parts of Esopus, Mamakating, Marletown, Rosendale, Rochester, and Wawarsing.

### Non-Tidal Rondout Creek Watershed

The watershed's rich biodiversity is a result of its variable landscape. To the north are the forested Catskill Mountains, where headwater streams such as the Sapbush Creek originate in the Catskill Forest Preserve. To the south are the steep rocky slopes of the Shawangunk Ridge, supporting another large forested area that also sources headwater streams. The higher-elevation tributaries flow to the more level terrain of the valley, where floodplains, wetlands, and farmland are more common, and tributaries such as the Kripplebush Creek meet the Rondout. To the east, the watershed holds the limestone caves and the Binnewater Lakes of Rosendale.

The geology, topography, hydrology, and land use history all weave together to shape a diversity of habitats supporting an equally diverse array of plant and animal communities. The priority habitats include streams and riparian corridors, forests, a variety of wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, farms, cliffs and caves.

### The Tidal Rondout Creek

The Rondout Creek is part of the tidal Hudson River Estuary. It includes Sleightsburg Marsh as well as flats, tidal wetlands, and shallows. The wetlands at the mouth of the Creek are both freshwater and tidal—a globally rare ecosystem. Tidal wetlands serve a very important purpose, not only providing habitat for rare plants and young fish, but other benefits like flood attenuation and wastewater dilution and purification.

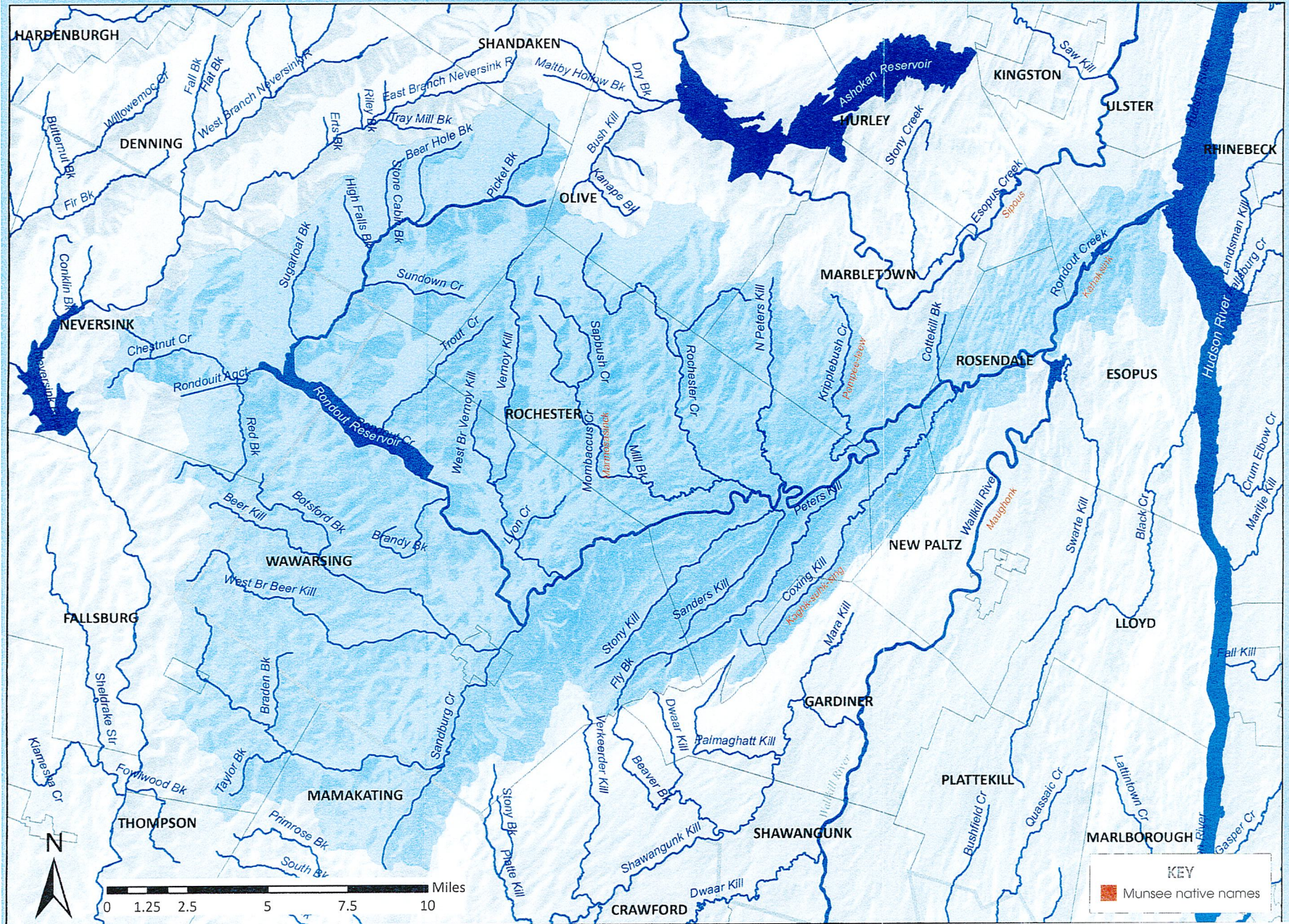
The tidal Rondout is a warm water stream that has experienced considerable human disturbance but remains important for migratory and resident freshwater fish. The New York Natural Heritage Program recognizes the tidal creek as a waterfowl overwintering area, important for species including mallard, black, and wood duck, and an anadromous fish concentration area for American shad, alewife, blueback herring, and striped bass among others. It is a state-designated significant coastal fish and wildlife habitat.



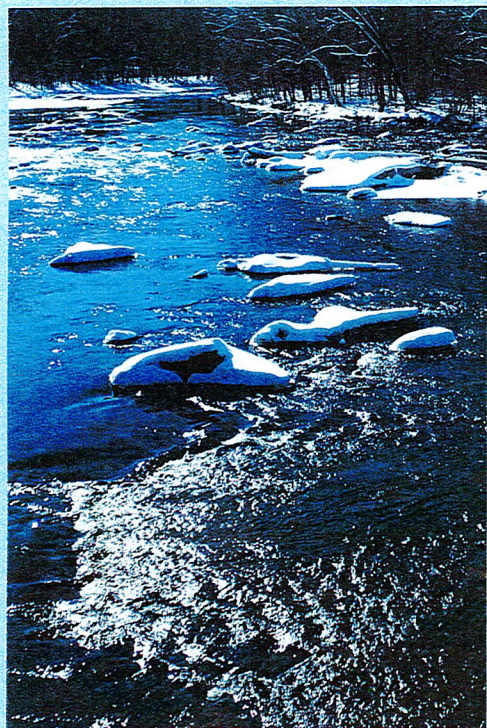
Unfragmented Forests: The Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains are ecologically significant for their biodiversity, in large part due to their contiguous, unfragmented forests. The NYS Open Space Conservation Plan prioritizes the protection of these forests and the links between them in the Rondout Valley.



# Rondout Creek Watershed







SNOWY RONDOUT IN ALLIGERVILLE



NEVERSINK RESERVOIR



SUNSET ON THE RONDOUT IN ROSENDALE



TREE PLANTING ON THE COXINGKILL



WAWARSING W.A.V.E. TRAINING



CREEK WEEK CLEAN-UP IN MARBLETOWN

A creek that we can swim in  
and fish in is both our right  
and our responsibility.



THE FALLS AT HIGH FALLS



MISTY RONDOUT IN ACCORD



CITY OF KINGSTON SLEIGHTSBURG MARSH