Hudson Hills and Highlands FOCUS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance – Summer 2011

ELLA's mission is to bring together town-appointed members of environmental commissions from across New York's Hudson Hills and Highlands to strengthen environmental protection at a regional level, through environmental training, sharing lessons learned, and fostering collaboration.

ELLA Update

ELLA recently hosted a forum on open space protection at Glynwood (http://www.glynwood.org/) in Putnam County. Despite the rain, the venue was amazing and we had a lively discussion led by speakers from the Philipstown Conservation Board, the Somers Land Trust, and the Hudson Highlands Land Trust. ELLA member, MJ Martin of the Philipstown CB demonstrated how their town conducted an open space inventory as part of the process for them to become a Board.

We also held the first meeting of ELLA's newly created Steering Committee. 15 ELLA members are on the Steering Committee, but we would like to get more from Putnam County (only 1 so far). We discussed possible topics for future workshops as well as other potential training opportunities. These include a field naturalist training series for ELLA members that would focus on how to identify native flora and fauna, and developing a program that guides members through the review of a site plan. This could include topics such as wetlands, biodiversity, stormwater and green infrastructure, and overall site design. We also discussed upcoming workshops. The next workshop is scheduled for Sept. 17 (*Save the Date!*) and will focus on local environmental regulations (see below). We then hope to follow this up with a workshop on the new stormwater regulations sometime in early December. Stay tuned for more information and please contact us with any thoughts or suggestions. Remember, ELLA is here to help you, so utilize us!

Does Your Municipality Make the Grade?

Have you ever wondered where your town/village compares with others in the Hudson Hills and Highlands in regards to its environmental protections? Would you like to get a better idea of what other towns are up to? To address the need of developing a clearinghouse of local environmental laws and regulations, Teatown has partnered with the Hudson River Estuary Program to create a database of this information. We hope that you will help us by reviewing the draft information on your specific municipality to ensure that it is accurate. ELLA will be reaching out to CACs/CBs in the near future to ask for assistance, but feel free to contact us if you would like to get started sooner. Once the database has been proofed we will then develop a metric to demonstrate how "green" the various municipalities are. We will be presenting the final database and rankings during ELLA's September 17 meeting. We hope that this will open a dialogue on meaningful environmental protection in the region and inspire groups to take action.

Somers Land Trust Sponsors Native Tree and Shrub Planting at Angle Fly Preserve

The Somers Land Trust sponsored a native tree and shrub planting project at Angle Fly Preserve in May. The project was part of *ELLA's Stream Conservation and Restoration Initiative*. The plants will form a riparian buffer to stabilize the soil and protect a tributary of the Angle Fly brook from the pollution of runoff from Route 139. The trees will also shade out ground-hugging invasive plants, provide habitat and act as a visual and sound buffer between the road and the Preserve. The project was possible thanks to a grant from ELLA and the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC). Significant support also was provided by "Hudson Estuary Trees for Tribs", a NYS DEC program which provided the power auger and assisted with the delivery and storage of plants. WAC provided 138 native trees and shrubs and materials including translucent sleeves or "*deer tubes*" to protect the young trees from deer and other wildlife, while letting in sunlight in and allowing room for growth. The plastic sleeves also have vent holes that allow air to flow in and around the tree and vent out the top of the tube.

The tractor-mounted power auger from the DEC as well as manual post-hole diggers was used for the planting. The Somers Land Trust hosted a contingent of DEC personnel as well as volunteers including interns from Teatown Lake Reservation. The trees have been tagged and numbered and will be monitored over the next few years by the WAC forester to assess their progress, making this one of the first on-going research projects at the Angle Fly Preserve. An educational sign will be posted showing the planting plan and the impact these projects have in protecting our streams. This project will become part of the larger "native habitat restoration area" that will incorporate the Reynolds pond at the entrance of the Angle Fly Preserve. This gateway area to the Preserve will become a showcase for wildlife management, native plants, and rain gardens for storm water management.

Thank you to Andrew Keegan for coordinating this article.

Over 100 native trees were planted alongside the hillside between Route 139 and the banks of a tributary to the Angle Fly Brook. Stakes and translucent growing tubes give the saplings a running start against deer, rabbits and storms.

Beth Roessler from the NYS/DEC digs holes for the trees. An auger this big really speeds things up.

Laura Hell of NYS/DEC and Mike Rubbo of Teatown settle trees into the planting holes then surround them with rain permeable fabric to keep *down competition from weeds and grass.*

All Photographs by Mike Lubchenko

EVENTS In and Around the ELLA Community

The Town of Greenburgh's Conservation Advisory Council and The Greenburgh Nature Center will be co-sponsoring the following environmental programs at the Greenburgh Nature Center.

These programs are open to the general public and begin at 7:00 PM.

- Thursday, September 8; Challenges of Nature Deficit Disorder: The Importance of Connecting Children with the Natural Environment; Presented by Courtney White, Executive Director, Greenburgh Nature Center

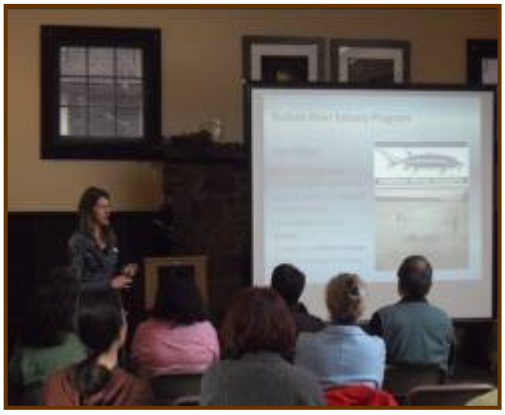
- Thursday, October 13; Flood Plain and Storm Water Planning. Presented by Srikanth Gorungantula, P.E., CFA

Thank you to ELLA Member and Vice Chair of the Town of Greenburgh CAC, Richard Ronde, for contributing this information.

ELLA members are eligible and encouraged to submit news, publicize an event happening in your community or pose a question. Simply send an e-mail to ellahhh@googlegroups.com

SAVE THE DATE! – ELLA Roundtable Discussion at Teatown

Saturday, September 17; 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM *Detailed flyer to follow in August*



ELLA Membership – Join Us!

Does your village or town have *newly* appointed members serving on their Conservation Advisory Boards and Committees, who would benefit from joining ELLA? Spread the word among your colleagues so they too can participate in engaging and informative workshops on a variety of environmental topics, find out about collaborative opportunities spanning municipalities and be part of a resource network sharing ideas and suggestions for issues happening in your community. Membership helps us to obtain the necessary funding to keep the program going.

Registering is easy and it's *FREE*. To sign-up, simply visit the ELLA website at www.ellahhh.net and select *How to Join!*