

Conservation Corner – Fall 2006

Skip Doyle

Whether I am leading a hike in the Highlands, kayaking in the Hudson, leading a bike ride through the Hudson Valley, or climbing in The Gunks, I am aware that I enjoy these recreational areas because of the efforts of conservationists. Conservation fosters the preservation of land and waterways for their natural use and promotes a healthy environment. To the extent that we clean our neighborhood, blaze or maintain trails, or even write a letter to our political leaders to preserve our resources, we are each conservationists.

A major conservation accomplishment, very much affecting our regional NY-NoJ chapter, and in which AMC members played a significant role, was the passage of the Highlands Conservation Act (HCA). The HCA authorizes Congress to put up to \$110 million over 10 years towards land conservation and technical assistance in the Highlands – a region consisting of 3.5 million acres spanning from PA, NJ, NY to CT. What you may not know is that AMC'ers played a big role in the passage of this landmark bill. AMC'er generated over 11,000 letters and emails to Congress in support of the Highlands bill. The HCA requires the governors of each Highlands state to jointly submit projects to the Department of Interior. New York State put forward two exciting projects: Arrow Park, over 350 acres adjacent to Sterling Forest in Orange County; and the Great Swamp, 950 acres in the Harlem Valley of eastern Putnam and Dutchess Counties. Currently, AMC is working with Congress to ensure funds from the HCA are put towards protecting Arrow Park and the Great Swamp in New York and other important lands in the rest of the Highlands. More information on the Highlands can be found at <http://highlandscoalition.org/thehighlands.htm>.

As part of my platform in volunteering to be the Conservation Committee chairman for our chapter, I committed to developing one conservation specific activity per schedule. For the Fall Schedule, I have arranged for a 3-hour sailing of the sloop **Clearwater** (www.clearwater.org) for AMC members on Sunday, October 22, departing at 10:00 from the 79th Street Boat Basin in Manhattan. The cost is \$40 per person. Accommodating only 50 people, each AMC member can bring only one guest. The cruise shall consist of an environment program, a nautical experience, and a bit of Hudson River history and song. Please check AMCconservation.org for details of the event and for when the 50 person capacity has been reached. (This will fill up quickly, so be sure to check the website.)

While some specific conservation activities are done through the Conservation Committee, most are done through conservation efforts of the various committees. Nancy Tollefson, Trails & Waves editor, has generously offered to provide a "Conservation Corner" in each newsletter to broadcast both upcoming conservation events and recent accomplishments. Therefore, I ask committee chairs to write to me at skip@AMCconservation.org so that I can timely include that information in upcoming "Conservation Corners".

Conservation goals are met by teamwork within AMC, and through coalitions with other organizations. As I commence my tenure as the AMC NY-NoJ Conservation Committee chair, I wish to express my gratitude to Henry Schreiber, John Jurasek, Art Tollefson and the entire Executive Committee for their direction and support; to Richard Barcia – Conservation Committee vice-chair – for the specific projects he undertakes, most notably with the Fire Island Wilderness Committee; to Faith Salter and Kristen Sykes our AMC conservation liaisons; to the many conservation organizations we partner with such as Teddy Eisenman of The Highlands Coalition, and Ed Goodell of the NY-NJ Trail Conference; and to the many committee chairs whose leaders and members are truly the ones improving our environment and making the outdoors accessible to us.