

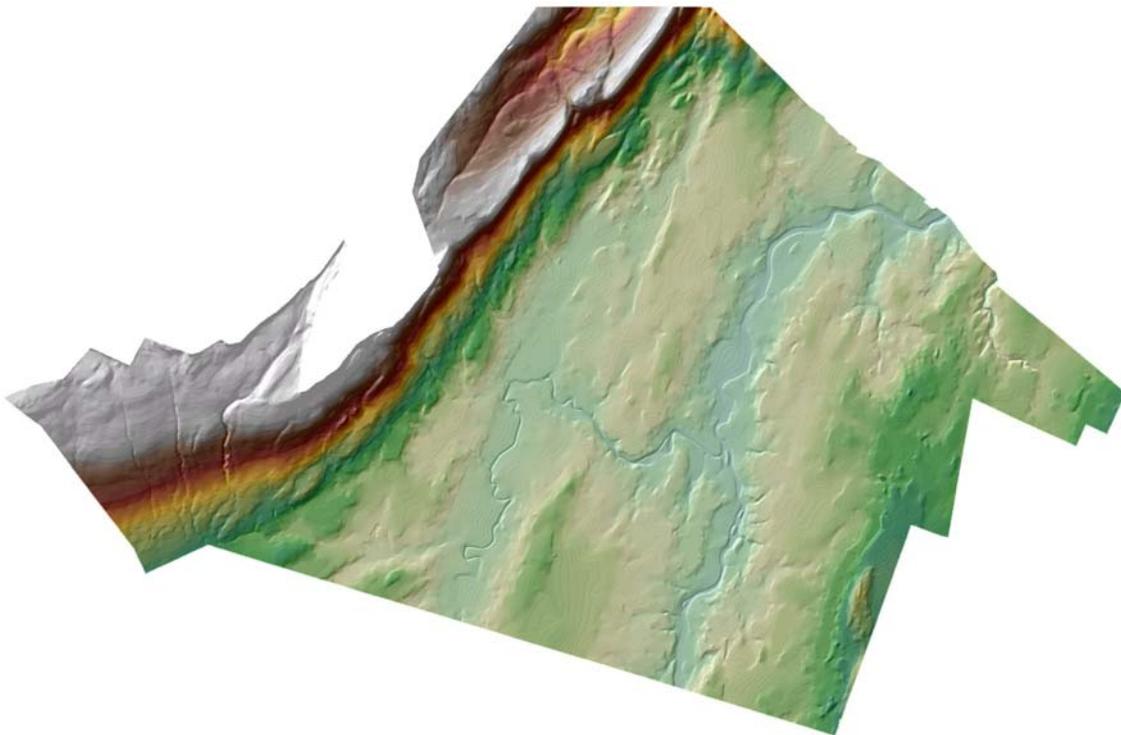
Chapter 3: Conservation Planning Areas and Corridors

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Introduction: The Landscape of Gardiner

Gardiner is fortunate to possess two extraordinary regional landscape features, which together have helped to shape the town's settlement and conservation patterns: the Shawangunk Ridge and the Wallkill Valley. The Shawangunk Ridge (“the ridge”), with its white talus cliffs, is a dominant landscape feature that is visible from much of the town. The ridge has been a recreation destination and the primary subject of conservation and recreation in the region for generations. In contrast, the Wallkill Valley, with its flat lands, fertile soils and water supplies, has historically been the choice location for human settlement and agriculture. The contrast between these two landscapes is striking from most locations in the town – looking west, the ridge rises quite distinctly against the flat, open lands of the valley.



A topographic representation of Gardiner reveals the low-lying rivers and floodplains (the Wallkill River in the center and the Shawangunk Kill feeding into it from the southwest part of town); the steep cliffs of the Shawangunk Ridge, and the relatively flat eastern valley of the Wallkill River.

Looking a little deeper at Gardiner's landscapes, we begin to see much finer patterns of working landscapes such as farms and orchards; wildlife habitat “patches” such as woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands; wildlife corridors such as streams and mountain passes; hamlets and settlement patterns; and scenic roads and landscapes which compose Gardiner's unique landscape experience.

Many of these landscape patterns extend beyond Gardiner. The farmland core areas in Gardiner, for example, are part of a regional Hudson River Valley farmland area, which has been

identified in the *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan* as a priority. Likewise, the Shawangunk Ridge in Gardiner is identified as a high priority in the State Open Space Conservation Plan. The Galeville Grasslands, Wallkill River and Shawangunk River are all identified as a priority in state or regional plans. This section of the plan helps to identify some of these finer-grained details and provides guidance for future planning efforts in the town.



The Shawangunk Ridge and the lands along its base are a high priority not only locally and regionally, but for the State of New York.

Conservation Planning Areas

INTRODUCTION

Many communities identify specialized districts for schools, water, sewer and other “gray infrastructure” as well as areas for comprehensive planning, neighborhood planning, and other physical planning efforts. This plan recommends a similar approach for “green infrastructure” or conservation planning, in which the town is organized into several planning areas and corridors with similar underlying resources to help focus conservation and land-use planning. The conservation planning areas and corridors are illustrated in the Conservation Planning Corridors Map on the following page.

Five major conservation planning areas within the town have been identified. They are summarized in the text box on this page. The primary goal within these

Gardiner’s Conservation Planning Areas

- **Shawangunk Ridge:** a regional landscape system in which it is critical to maintain functioning natural systems and wildlife connectivity, as well as recreational and scenic values
- **River Greenbelts:** the waters of the town’s major rivers and streams and their associated floodplains, wetlands, forests and upland riparian buffers
- **East of Walkkill:** an agricultural and heritage area including the Route 208 corridor, currently facing the town’s most intensive growth pressures and with important town aquifer resources
- **River to Ridge:** agricultural and scenic area between the Wallkill and Shawangunk Rivers and the Shawangunk Ridge
- **Between the Kills:** agricultural and grasslands area between the Shawangunk Kill and Wallkill Rivers

planning areas is to maintain the integrity of the open space resources, whether they are working landscapes such as farms, orchards, vineyards and managed forests, or natural systems such as wildlife habitat or aquifer recharge areas.

In addition, there are also **four conservation corridors** identified within the plan. These corridors connect isolated resource areas to create more unified linear corridors of scenic, agricultural, historical and recreational value.

The conservation planning areas can be used to help guide planning efforts; inform conservation and development decisions; and guide infrastructure and development decisions within the town. This section of the plan provides a brief summary of each of the conservation planning areas and corridors and the resources within them. Detailed values, goals, and recommendations are also provided for each conservation planning area and corridor.

Gardiner's Conservation Planning Corridors

- **Hamlet Corridor:** linking together the town's hamlets and the heritage associated with them: Benton Corners, Tuthilltown, Trapps Gateway, Gardiner, and Ireland Corners
- **Agricultural Corridor:** connecting the heritage of many of the town's major working farms, and associated agri-tourism opportunities
- **Scenic Corridor:** providing a linear corridor of scenic views of the Wallkill River and the Shawangunk Ridge as well as opportunities to promote Gardiner as a recreational gateway
- **Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail:** a linear recreational corridor with scenic views and opportunities for enhanced community connections

CONSERVATION PLANNING AREAS

Shawangunk Ridge

The Shawangunk Ridge is a unique geological feature that extends in a northeast-southwest direction from northern New Jersey to the Town of Rosendale in Ulster County. It is perhaps the town's most prominent natural feature. The ridge begins at the "break-in-slope," the topographic line at which the percent slope dramatically increases, providing the appearance of a steep incline.

The Shawangunk Ridge is a regional landscape of national significance, in which it is critical to maintain functioning natural systems and wildlife connectivity, as well as recreational and scenic values.

The importance of the ridge ecosystem is evidenced by the generations of activists and researchers that have helped to conserve it. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has identified the Shawangunk Ridge as one of the "last great places" because of its significant ecology including rare and endangered species habitat. According to TNC, the Shawangunk Mountains support over 35 natural communities, "including one of only two ridgetop dwarf pine barrens in the world, chestnut oak forests, hemlock forests, pitch pine forests, lakes, rivers and wetlands." In addition, twenty-seven rare plant and animal species have been documented to exist in the Shawangunks.

The National Audubon Society has designated the Northern Shawangunks region as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The Northern Shawangunks IBA is bordered by the Wallkill River and Shawangunk Kill on the southeast, Route 52 on the southwest, and Rondout Creek on the north. According to Audubon, the IBA is a global program to identify “places that are critical to birds during some part of their life cycle (breeding, wintering, feeding, migrating),” with the goal of protecting them to “minimize the effects that habitat loss, and degradation have on bird populations.”

In Gardiner, the Shawangunk Ridge ecosystem includes the headwaters and watersheds of many rivers and streams, including the Coxing Kill and Palmaghatt Kill watersheds. It also includes a large and important “patch” of unfragmented chestnut-oak forest which extends well beyond Gardiner and serves as important wildlife habitat. Upland communities in the Shawangunk Ridge ecosystem in Gardiner include the Chestnut-Oak forest, Northern Hardwood/Mesic Oak Forest, and Cliff and Talus.



The ridge is an ecologically-diverse area that supports many rare and endangered species. It is also a significant regional wildlife corridor.

The Shawangunk Ridge has also been designated as a priority in the *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan*. According to the plan, the Shawangunk Ridge is “one of the highest priority areas for biodiversity conservation in the northeastern United States.” In addition, the plan recognizes that the “protection of the Northern Shawangunks in Ulster County is critical to maintaining the input of high-quality water to the Rondout and Wallkill Valleys.” In essence, protection of the ridge is of local, regional and state significance.

The cliff and talus complex in Gardiner is thought to be the largest of its type east of the Mississippi, and should be protected for its rarity. The cliff and talus community forms where the underlying shale erodes along the edge of the cliff, particularly on eastern exposures. According to a recent publication of the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership entitled *Green Assets: Planning for People and Nature Along the Shawangunk Mountains*, the “cliff edges, escarpments and talus provide habitat for lichens, ferns and several locally rare animals including the peregrine falcon, common ravens and black vultures.” The cliff and talus complex is also a critical recharge area. Buffering the cliff and talus is recommended to ensure full protection of water quality and wildlife habitat. **A total patch area of 350-450 acres, with a 900-foot minimum forest buffer, is recommended by the Green Assets Program to maintain the high-quality of this rare community.** Approximately 66% of the cliff and talus community of the Shawangunk Ridge is within the Town of Gardiner.

In Gardiner, a large portion of the ridge ecosystem is protected as part of the Mohonk Preserve and Minnewaska State Park, as well as the recent Awosting Reserve acquisition. However, there are several critical parcels, especially along the base of the ridge and within and adjacent to the cliff and talus natural community, which are not protected. These should be considered high priority for conservation.

Also of importance is the management of the ridge for recreation. With opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, rock-climbing, fishing, and other outdoor activities, the ridge's fragile ecosystem is often stressed by the human impacts of recreation. The Mohonk Preserve has been addressing this issue by imposing limitations of daily visitorship to match the carrying capacity of the ridge. Providing additional opportunities off of the ridge (for example, along the rivers in the valley such as the Wall Kill and Shawangunk Kill) can help to reduce some of the recreational pressure on the ridge.

Primary goals for the Shawangunk Ridge ecosystem include protecting large areas of unfragmented habitat, including adequate buffer areas; protecting smaller areas of rare or high-quality habitat such as the cliff and talus; and maintaining adequate wildlife corridors and connections from the ridge to the valley.

Three important wildlife corridors that connect the ridge to the valley include the corridor that extends along the Palmaghatt Kill, through Tillson Lake to the Shawangunk Kill (Tillson Lake Wildlife Corridor); the corridor that connects the ridge to the Shawangunk Kill where its bend is close to the break-in-slope (River to Ridge Wildlife Corridor); and the corridor that connects the ridge to the Walkkill River through Trapps Pass (Trapps Pass Wildlife Corridor).

Values:

- Water recharge and quality (specifically cliff and talus)
- Major wildlife corridors
- Recreation opportunities: rock climbing, hiking, snowshoeing, and other passive forms of recreation
- Scenic views
- Streams (Coxing Kill, headwaters of Palmaghatt Kill) and Tillson Lake

Conservation Goals:

- Conserve large parcels along the ridge and base of the ridge, and other important wildlife corridors (river and stream corridors and passes)
- Avoid fragmentation of forest, streams, and other large blocks of habitat
- Protect and buffer cliff and talus (water recharge/water quality)
- Enhance the recreational experience and awareness of Gardiner as the gateway to the Gunks (Trapps gateway)
- Protect views to and from the ridge

Recommendations:

- Work with landowners and conservation partners to **fill conservation “gaps” along the ridge and the base of the ridge, including conservation of the cliff and talus lands** and necessary buffer areas.
- Continue to address **scenic quality in zoning and land use tools** to ensure that scenic ridge views and landscapes are preserved.
- Work with land conservation partners in **planning for the Awosting Reserve** to ensure that Gardiner's conservation and recreation goals are met.
- Create a **“Gateway to the Gunks” plan** that identifies physical enhancements to the Trapps Gateway, as well as enhancements other prominent entrances to Gardiner and the Shawangunks. This could be developed through a design charrette process with the community resulting in a simple plan illustration and clear plan of action.

River Greenbelts

Gardiner's water resources include two significant local and regional river corridors: the Wallkill River and the Shawangunk Kill. Their floodplains also provide significant agricultural benefits, among others. Other river greenbelts, many of which have their source in the Shawangunk Ridge, include the Coxing Kill, Mara Kill, Klyne Kill, and Palmaghatt Kill. A more detailed discussion of Gardiner's two major rivers, the Shawangunk Kill and the Wallkill River, follows.

River greenbelts are the waters of the town's major rivers and streams and their associated floodplains, wetlands, forests and upland riparian buffers: the Shawangunk Kill, Wallkill, Klyne Kill, Mara Kill, Palmaghatt Kill and Coxing Kill.

Shawangunk Kill

The Shawangunk Kill is a tributary of the Hudson River and flows generally east from its headwaters on the Shawangunk Ridge in Orange County until it meets the Wallkill in Gardiner. The Wallkill meets the Hudson River near Kingston. A stretch of the Shawangunk Kill between the border of Orange and Ulster County and its confluence with the Wallkill River has been designated as a Recreational River under the New York State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Act of 1982. This designation affords the Shawangunk Kill some protection, and requires in many cases, a permit from the DEC for new development in the river corridor. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has also named the Shawangunk Kill a significant habitat complex of the New York Bight Watershed.



An overlook of the Shawangunk Kill near the Tuthilltown Gristmill.

The Hudson River Estuary Program confirms the importance of the Shawangunk Kill in Gardiner by identifying specific areas along the river as "high-quality" habitat. Rare plants have been documented along much of the Shawangunk Kill's length in Gardiner, specifically closer to where it meets the Wallkill River. See Appendix B for more information.

Also of particular importance in Gardiner are the large remnant patches of floodplain forest that line the Shawangunk Kill, especially the southern reach in Gardiner. According to the Hudson River Estuary Program, there are 27 remnant patches, of which there are "two larger core areas that have the potential to be larger." Rare plant species are also found along the Shawangunk Kill, particularly as it reaches the junction with the Wallkill River. Protection and potential expansion of floodplain forest along the Shawangunk Kill should be given high priority. Management of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed is also important in this area.

Wallkill River

The Wallkill River begins in Lake Mohawk, a spring-fed lake in northern New Jersey and flows north through Sussex and Passaic Counties in New Jersey and Orange and Ulster Counties in New York. It merges with the Rondout Creek south of Kingston and ultimately enters the Hudson River Estuary. Over two-thirds of the river's 94-miles occur in New York State. In Gardiner, the Wallkill River traverses the central part of the town and serves as a regional wildlife corridor through Gardiner. Its proximity to one of the town's major population centers, Gardiner Hamlet, also offers opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of the river.

The Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District is currently in the process of developing the *Wallkill River Watershed Management Plan* through funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program. This plan will provide a detailed analysis of the current state of the watershed and its resources and will serve as a source of guidance for local communities in addressing watershed planning issues.

The Wallkill River corridor and its tributaries serve as a wildlife corridor, connecting the Wallkill River Valley to the foothills and to habitat areas along the ridge. The Wallkill River corridor also provides important wildlife connectivity through the valley both north and south. The riparian lands that border the Wallkill River offer critical habitat for aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. Preserving riparian lands also offers human benefits, as these lands act as a natural filtration system to improve water quality, and reduce flooding and erosion of the riverbanks.



The Wallkill River is a significant natural resource in Gardiner, defining the geography of the eastern portion of town.

Values:

- Water quality, aquifer recharge
- Flood protection
- Wildlife connectivity and habitat
- Scenic views and scenic corridor
- Recreation opportunities

Conservation Goals:

- Protect and buffer the river corridors and floodplains
- Conserve large forest patches and wetland clusters along the river floodplains and connect them to create larger wildlife corridors
- Provide public access to rivers for recreational purposes (kayaking, canoeing, fishing, hiking, picnicking, etc.)

Recommendations:

- **Designate the Shawangunk Kill and Wallkill Rivers as greenways** and work towards developing linear trail corridors along these rivers that connect to a series of parks, access areas and other destinations.
- Work with landowners and conservation partners to conserve a significant acreage of **riparian forest lands, wetlands and other important river buffer lands**. This could be accomplished through a combination of fee-simple purchase of land as well as through easements and conservation development.
- Create a **public park** with boat launching facilities and a swimming area along the **Wallkill River** in the vicinity of its confluence with the Shawangunk Kill.

East of the Wallkill River

The area east of the Wallkill River is predominantly settled with residential and agricultural land uses. It also includes the town’s largest aquifer recharge area, an abundance of historical and cultural resources and several important natural areas.

East of the Wallkill is an agricultural heritage area including the Route 208 corridor; this area is currently facing the town’s most intensive growth pressures.

Active farms in the east of the Wallkill River area include Dressel Farms, Tantillo’s Farm, and Wright’s Apple Farm. All three farms offer farm stands along Route 208 and provide farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as many other products.

Gardiner’s two Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) businesses are also located in this area: Four Winds Farm and Phillis Bridge Farm. In a CSA, individuals purchase a share of the farm’s products for a full season, providing a more reliable source of income for the farm and a full season of produce for the individual. CSAs typically offer a variety of fruits and vegetables grown on a local, community scale to support their shareholders through the season. Additionally, Meadow View Farm is another community-scale farm that offers a variety of “same-day picked produce grown using organic practices and sustainable agriculture methods.” Meadow View Farm and Phillis Bridge Farm are both located on Phillis Bridge Road. Four Winds Farm is located on Marabac Road.



Dressel Farm, which is located in the towns of New Paltz and Gardiner, helps to preserve some of the most scenic views of the Shawangunk Mountains from Route 208.

Town of Gardiner Open Space Plan

This area includes the largest of the town's primary aquifer recharge areas, which generally follows the Route 208 corridor. Currently, much of this area is settled with farms and orchards which help to keep the land open and maintain the aquifer's recharge capacity. However, as Gardiner continues to grow, these farms become the most likely area for new development because they provide flat lands that are easily developable and have adequate water supplies. Many lands along Route 208 also provide scenic views of the ridge that are attractive to developers and homebuyers.

A cursory build-out analysis of the east of the Wallkill River area identifies the potential for approximately 2,100 additional units in this landscape, which would not only drastically change the character of Gardiner but would also produce extensive pressure on the town's primary aquifer resources, as well as on the town's fiscal capacity, as development typically costs a community substantially more in services than farmland or open space. For this reason, it is important that the agricultural land uses in this portion of town are conserved. Additionally, the town's CSAs, farm stands, wineries and markets contribute greatly to the local economy. Many Gardiner residents are proud of their efforts to shop locally, which helps to support their local businesses, and spreads their dollars deeper into the community and region.



Tantillo's Farm Market is a popular Gardiner destination during the growing season.



The Town of Gardiner has restored this former schoolhouse, which now serves as the Town Hall.

Jenkins-DuBois Farm. The Forest Glen hamlet, site of a stop on the Walkill Valley Railroad, contains numerous historic LeFevre houses and the Kettleboro School. These and other historic resources in Gardiner should be preserved much in the same manner that open space resources are preserved. Tax incentives and other tools can be used to encourage preservation.

Residential land uses in the east of Wallkill River area include dense, hamlet-style settlement and more recent suburban-style developments. Hamlets in the east of Wallkill River area include Jenkinstown, Forest Glen, Ireland Corners and the town's major population and commercial center – Gardiner Hamlet. These focused settlement patterns help to maintain rural character, open space, and aquifer resources necessary to sustain the quality of life that Gardiner residents enjoy. Many of these hamlets also contain historic resources and help to preserve Gardiner's heritage. For example, the Jenkinstown hamlet includes the historic Locust Lawn Estate and the

The east of Wallkill River area also contains some very unique, rare or significant wildlife habitats and natural areas. The area around Phillis Bridge Farm, for example, contains wet meadow habitat which is important for the state-endangered and federally threatened Bog Turtle. The Plattekill Gorge area is a cool ravine community with steep slopes surrounded by a hemlock forest, and may contain rare plants and species. Many of the farms in this area also contain wet and calcareous wet meadows which are of conservation importance because they support rare species. Important wetlands known as kettle shrub pools have also been found in Gardiner. These wetlands may serve as habitat for the state-threatened Blanding's Turtle.

Values:

- Aquifer recharge
- Large wetland and woodland patches
- Rare and important wildlife habitat and areas
- History and heritage: Jenkinstown, Forest Glen, Locust Lawn, etc.

Conservation Goals:

- Conserve important and rare wildlife habitat and areas and connect them to other natural areas
- Conserve working farmlands and integrate them into a larger open space system
- Protect and provide public access to unique places such as the Plattekill Gorge
- Conserve large areas of forest and wetlands and connect them to the open space system
- Protect heritage and history

Recommendations:

- Create a **preserve along the Plattekill Gorge** with public access and viewing areas.
- Ensure **permanent protection of important wetland features** such as kettle shrub pools and vernal pools, ensure that these features are provided adequate buffer distance and connectivity.
- Work to obtain **historic district designation** for the many historic features in the Jenkinstown and Forest Glen areas.
- Protect priority farmlands through **PDR or conservation easement**.

River to Ridge

The River to Ridge conservation planning area is between the town's two major rivers and the Shawangunk Ridge. It buffers the break-in-slope along the Shawangunk Ridge. Open space resources in this area are abundant and include a diversity of active farms as well as a wealth of scenic roads and views, and important wildlife connections between the ridge and the valley.

River to Ridge is an agricultural and scenic area between the Walkkill and Shawangunk Rivers and the Shawangunk Ridge.

Working lands in the River to Ridge planning area include several beef farms, vineyards and horse farms. Watchtower is the largest landowner in this area. Other farms include Majestic View Farm, Rivendell Vineyard, Raindancer Farms, Jenkins-Lueken Orchard, Just Resting Farm, and Widmark Honey Farm. These farms contribute to Gardiner's economy as well as its open space character. Many farms in this area provide large areas of unfragmented habitat, such as wetlands and woodlands, that are important for wildlife connectivity. The farms in this area also contribute greatly to the scenic quality of the ridge, especially as experienced along the town's major scenic roads such as Route 299, North/South Mountain Road, Route 7, and Routes 44/55. The flat, open farmlands also provide contrast against the ridge's steep cliffs, and help to make the views of the ridge much more dramatic and pronounced.



Open farmlands along Route 7/Bruynswick Road help to frame the scenic Shawangunk Ridge in the background.

Important habitat and natural areas are abundant in the River to Ridge conservation planning area include wetland complexes, large areas of unfragmented forest (mostly northern

hardwood/mesic oak), and some smaller areas of successional mixed forest that are dispersed within the larger forest blocks. Major wetland complexes are associated with Heddens Lake and the Mara Kill, as well as some larger wetland complexes which are located between Rt. 7/Brunswyck Road and Route 299. The Green Assets program recommends a wetland buffer of 300-1,000 feet to protect the integrity of the wetland. Forested land provides the best buffer for these wetlands.

As mentioned previously, there are several areas of unfragmented woodlands, many located on farmland, which are important connections for wildlife. Three important wildlife corridors that connect the ridge to the valley include the Tillson Lake Wildlife Corridor, the River to Ridge Wildlife Corridor, and the Trapps Pass Wildlife Corridor, all of which are described in more detail in the Shawangunk Ridge conservation planning area summary.

Values:

- Scenic Shawangunk Ridge views
- Wildlife connectivity: stream corridors, large woods, wetland patches, farmlands, mountain ridge passes
- Rivers, streams and ponds: Klyne Kill, Shawangunk Kill, Heddens Lake, Mara Kill
- Major wetland systems

Conservation Goals:

- Conserve a large, contiguous core of active farms and farmlands
- Protect and buffer large wetland complexes and forest patches
- Maintain wildlife connectivity through rivers, streams, forests, and mountain passes (such as Trapps Pass)

Recommendations:

- Work with landowners and conservation partners to conserve and buffer a **large core of wetland and woodland habitat**. If feasible, provide appropriate passive public access to the preserve for educational purposes.
- Protect priority farmlands through PDR or conservation easement.

Between the Kills

This area between the Shawangunk Kill and the Wallkill River is the smallest of all of the conservation planning areas, yet it contains a diversity of significant open space resources.

Between the Kills is an agricultural, scenic and natural habitat area between the Shawangunk Kill and Wallkill Rivers

It is primarily an agricultural area, with the majority of this conservation planning area within the Ulster County Agricultural District. It is also a scenic and natural area that provides important habitat connectivity through the grasslands associated with the farms in the area.

Major agricultural uses in this area include Whitecliff Vineyard and Brykill Farm, both of which are adjacent to the Shawangunk Kill, with views of the ridge. The Brykill Farm house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



A view of the open grasslands from Burnt Meadow Road with the Shawangunk Kill and Shawangunk Mountains in the distance.

Several large areas of grasslands are located in this conservation planning area and are important for

connectivity to the larger Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge. Grassland habitat supports a diversity of bird species, many of which are threatened or endangered. The Shawangunk Grasslands area is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and the *2005 Draft New York State Open Space Conservation Plan* identifies the grasslands as an important area (part of the larger Shawangunk Mountains area), and recommends conservation of additional lands around the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge. Conservation of lands within this area also helps to protect and buffer the two major rivers – the Shawangunk Kill and Walkkill.

Values:

- River corridors and floodplains: Shawangunk Kill, Wall Kill
- Grasslands wildlife connections
- Woodlands
- Working farms

Conservation Goals:

- Conserve grassland wildlife connections
- Conserve working farms and forests and associated lands

Recommendations:

- Work with landowners and conservation partners to conserve a **grassland habitat connection** to the National Wildlife Preserve.
- Protect priority farmlands through PDR or conservation easement.

Conservation Planning Corridors

INTRODUCTION

Some of Gardiner’s conservation resources, such as wildlife corridors, trails, scenic roadways, and even some of the agricultural resources, seem to neatly follow linear paths. These corridors connect significant resources within the town and frame much of the community’s experience of the town’s open space resources. For example, the hamlet corridor is where the majority of Gardiner’s population lives and where many historic and cultural resources are located; similarly, the rail-trail is a linear recreational corridor from which many residents are able to view the town’s farms and open spaces. The corridors are identified as conservation planning areas to recognize and build upon the linear connections in planning and conservation efforts. Additionally, promotional and education activities are often best focused around a linear resources that is easily accessed by community members.

Hamlet Corridor

The hamlet corridor is a linear connection linking together the town’s hamlets and the heritage associated with them. The hamlet corridor connects the hamlets of Benton Corners, Tuthilltown, Gardiner, Ireland Corners and Trapps Gateway, as well as their historic resources (such as the Gardiner School, the Bevier House, and the Tuthilltown Gristmill). The hamlet corridor offers opportunities to connect together the town’s major population centers and its major resources. This could be done through trail connections, signs, and other guidance. Ideally, the hamlet corridor would extend beyond the hamlets to connect to the major gateways to the Gunks (Trapps Gateway as well as the future gateway for the Awosting Reserve). This would help Gardiner to capture some of the tourism along the ridge and disperse it within the town, providing economic benefits while also helping to diffuse some of the tourism and recreational pressure on the ridge.



Located on the banks of the Shawangunk Kill, the Tuthilltown Grist Mill is the oldest continually-operated water-powered grist mill in the state.

The town is currently in the process of developing a plan for a pedestrian network in the Gardiner Hamlet, which could serve as the first piece of a hamlet greenway. The Gardiner Hamlet Pedestrian Network includes aesthetic and access improvements in the hamlet such as a hamlet green and sidewalk system, a “civic loop” that connects the town hall with the proposed town library, Shawangunk overlook, and destinations within Majestic Park. It also includes a boat launch/fishing access area on the Wallkill River with nature trails and other amenities.

Values:

- History and heritage
- Sense of place and walkability

- Architectural diversity and heritage
- Connectivity: rail-trail, bike routes, hamlet corridor, etc.

Conservation Goals:

- Connect hamlets and residential areas to each other and to the town’s major destinations
- Provide public access to rivers and other areas of interest
- Preserve and interpret the town’s history through hamlets and settlement areas

Recommendations:

- Create a **plan for a hamlet greenway** in the heart of Gardiner. Hold a public charrette to discuss ideas with the community and use this information to create a plan for the greenway. The greenway should connect hamlets and residential areas to each other and to the town’s major destinations such as the hamlets, the rail trail, Majestic Park, rivers and access areas, the Tuthilltown Gristmill, and other historic points of interest. Ideally, this plan would continue the connection to the ridge’s major gateways helping to draw tourism from the ridge into the town.
- Develop **hamlet design guidelines** to ensure that new growth protects the sense of place and historic character of the hamlets.
- **Improve signage along the hamlet corridor** to identify important heritage information, access areas, destinations, recreational gateways, and other tourist attractions.

Agricultural Heritage Corridors

Agricultural heritage corridors connect many of the town’s major working farms, and the agri-tourism and heritage opportunities associated with them. There are two major agricultural heritage corridors in Gardiner: Route 208 and Route 7/Bruynswick Road. The Shawangunk Wine Trail currently follows Route 7 and connects Whitecliff and Rivendell Vineyards in Gardiner with many other vineyards in the region. Route 208 includes several farm stands for residents and tourists to visit, including those of Tantillo, Wright and Dressel Farms. The Gardiner Association of Businesses recently published an informative brochure identifying Gardiner’s “Farm Trail” – its farm markets and CSAs and its beef, wine and honey farms. These types of materials are important to promote Gardiner’s businesses, as well as consumption of local products.



Whitecliff Vineyard is one of Gardiner’s two vineyards located along the Shawangunk Wine Trail.

Values:

- Agricultural production (connective corridor of working farms and farm resources)

- Agricultural heritage and tourism (visible active farms and agriculture - vineyards, orchards, farms, farm markets)

Conservation Goals:

- Promote and encourage local consumption and maintain visibility of active agriculture, farm stands, etc.
- Promote/enhance scenic wine trail and other agri-tourism opportunities (e.g. beef belt)

Recommendations:

- Conduct a **focused planning workshop** to discuss **opportunities for agricultural business development**, agri-tourism and other potential opportunities with the agricultural community. Consider extending the meeting beyond the town’s borders to include agricultural stakeholders in neighboring communities. Follow up with additional projects and planning as developed through the workshop. One idea which has been discussed by the community is the promotion of a regional organic “beef belt” along Rt. 7/Brunswick Rd. This workshop would help to confirm support for such projects and to develop priorities for efforts.
- Continue to support agri-tourism efforts in the community and region through brochures, promotional materials and other efforts.

Scenic Corridors

There are several roadways with scenic views of the Wallkill River and the Shawangunk Ridge in Gardiner. All of the town’s scenic roads are identified on Map 7 in Chapter II. The scenic corridors identified in the Conservation Planning Areas Map are those that are highly traveled, widely viewed, and offer major opportunities for promotion of Gardiner as a tourism and recreational gateway. The town’s major scenic corridors include North and South Mountain Road, Route 299, Route 44/55, and Route 32, as well as Route 7 and Route 208 (which are also identified as important agricultural corridors). It is important to preserve views along these roads, which are the lenses through which many town residents and tourists view the town.



Scenic views along Rt. 7/Brunswick Road consist of open lands, sparse rural settlement and views of the Shawangunk Ridge.

Values:

- Scenic views and landscapes (to and from ridge)

Conservation Goals:

- Protect views along scenic roads (Route 32, Route 299, Route 44/55, North/South Mountain Road, Route 7, Route 208)

Recommendations:

- Create **scenic landscape guidelines** to help inform new development and conservation efforts within the town’s conservation planning areas.
- Continue to participate in implementation of the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.
- Limit size and placement of commercial signage in the scenic corridors.

Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail

The Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail (the “rail-trail”) is a linear recreational corridor with scenic views and opportunities for enhanced community connections. The rail-trail, which currently continues from Gardiner north into the Town and Village of New Paltz, provides connections between these adjacent communities. The rail-trail provides a non-motorized alternative



An access point to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail near Forest Glen. Here, the rail-trail offers a quiet, wooded setting for walking, hiking or biking.

for travel through a diversity of destinations, including farmlands, parks and other open spaces, hamlets and settlement areas (including Gardiner Hamlet and the Village of New Paltz). It is also a scenic corridor with views of the farms, woods, rivers and open spaces it traverses. In Gardiner, the rail-trail offers the potential to serve as a main spine of a larger trail network that could expand outward, making the east-west connections from the rail-trail to other destinations in town.

Values:

- Recreation/destination
- Connectivity
- Scenic quality

Concepts:

- Connect rail-trail to hamlets and residential areas
- Protect the scenic views from the rail-trail
- Connect rail-trail to rivers, streams historic areas and other major destinations

Recommendations:

- Working with landowners and the community, create a **community trail and access plan** for Gardiner, using the rail-trail, proposed hamlet greenway, and the proposed river greenways as the main focal areas for the trail, and identify additional desired connections between the rail trail, hamlet greenway and river

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greenways and other important future trail corridors. This trail plan should be conducted in conjunction with conservation planning and should allow for connections to future conservation areas or preserves, as appropriate. The plan should include a proposed trail alignment map which can help to ensure that proposed trail segments are created through future development and conservation projects. The plan should also be coordinated with regional planning efforts such as those of the Southern Ulster Alliance.

At public workshops for this open space plan, community members expressed an interest in developing a trail along the Wallkill River and Shawangunk Kill; creating connections between the Rail Trail and the hamlets; and in a future link between the hamlets and the Shawangunk Ridge. The recent acquisition of the Awosting Reserve also offers potential for future development of an additional public access gateway to the “Gunks” which could be connected to the town’s population centers.

Making Use of the Conservation Planning Areas and Corridors

Much like any other type of planning districts, these conservation planning areas can be used to help further resource understanding and advance recommendations for both conservation planning and development. Below are some recommended approaches for furthering conservation within these planning areas.

DETAILED MAPPING OF CONSERVATION AREAS

As a first step, each conservation planning area can be further analyzed and mapped to depict resources on a finer, more detailed scale, which will help to identify important resources and patterns that are not detected at the town-wide scale. One example of this application is the mapping of forest cover and vegetation. At the town-wide scale, it is important to identify large blocks of forest to maintain landscape connectivity. At the site scale, smaller forest blocks and even hedgerows within farmlands are important to wildlife connectivity.

CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Using the more detailed mapping and interpretation of resources recommended above, design guidelines can be created to help guide development and conservation in each of the conservation planning areas. Overlaying the priority conservation network (identified in Chapter 4) with these detailed maps will also help to determine where connections (for wildlife and for people) between priority conservation areas might be made.

These guidelines can be used in developing conservation projects as well as in development projects. For example, with the creation of a new town park or open space area, these guidelines can help inform the use and management program for the lands, thus helping to guide the conservation project. The guidelines can also be used by the planning board to review new development proposals, and ultimately to help inform the design of new developments.

Design Guidelines for Conservation and Development

Design guidelines for Gardiner could help to clearly identify how new conservation or development projects can:

- Minimize impacts on aquifer resources
- Ensure protection of the large blocks of viable farmlands
- Maximize landscape connectivity and wildlife corridors
- Ensure that the habitat needs of individual species are met
- Protect the integrity and character of historic and scenic resources
- Create and maintain community trail and greenway connections

Conclusion

This chapter provides a landscape overview of Gardiner's major conservation resources, organized into conservation planning areas and corridors. These planning areas and corridors, and the associated map, should be consulted for all planning efforts within the town, from development on individual parcels, to infrastructure, park, trail and other decisions.