

## Policy Area I Open Space and Natural Resource Management



### **OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Open space and natural resources are important to our quality of life and provide a range of social, environmental and economic benefits. There are many different types of open space and natural resources, with a range of functions.

Open space is both green, blue and civic space. Open space and natural resources include natural areas like forests, rivers, lakes, bays, farms, environmentally sensitive areas, human heritage sites, parks, golf courses and any other land or water area that is kept permanently or semi-permanently undeveloped. The retention of open space for farming, fishing, forestry, hunting, tourism, recreation, mining, and the preservation of the environment is important to ensure we continue to benefit from our natural resources.

The goal of open space planning is to protect areas that are valuable and valued and ensure that open space is provided within easy reach of new development, and is of appropriate size and quality. Where possible, spaces should link together in a network, which can encourage walking and cycling, while green networks and corridors can promote biodiversity.

Open space and natural resource strategies are a means of coordinating the aims of different owners and governmental branches, and liaising with users, community groups and other members of the private and nonprofit sectors. Strategies should be based on an audit and assessment of existing open space and natural resources, economic and developmental trends. Strategies should feed into the development plan, providing the basis for informed policy, land disposal, and spending decisions. Effective links between planning, design, preservation, development and management, and the involvement of local communities, can ensure the long term viability of open space and natural resources that meets current and future needs.



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### Goal:

*Balance conservation and development at the local level to provide for sustainable growth.*



### OPEN SPACE

The residents of Sullivan County gave open space conservation a high level of importance in the ***Sullivan 2020 Survey, Focus Group Meetings*** and the ***Sullivan 2020 Steering Committee Meetings***. A strong desire for sustainable growth was expressed and residents asked that “areas of significance” be identified first to determine low and high priority areas of development.

The role of Local Government is critical to achieving the desired outcome and the effective implementation of open space conservation and natural resource management. Under the Municipal Home Rule Law, municipalities have the authority to adopt local regulations for the protection and enhancement of its physical environment. Planning and land use control at the local level can help to manage the natural resources of the County.

Open spaces and natural resources make up the fiber of Sullivan County, which are valued by its residents. There are protected areas such as the Catskill Park, the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, and the Bashakill wetland, as well as significant privately owned open space and natural resources. The benefits of protecting and preserving the County’s natural resources are enormous. They include scenic beauty that attracts visitors and new residents, improved air and water quality, human health and quality of life, and increased property values. Additionally, reduced energy and infrastructure costs can be realized.

Achieving the right balance between private property rights and protection of the County’s rural character and quality of natural resources can occur through open space conservation and natural resource management. Open space conservation is a technique that municipalities can use to plan ahead for development and make decisions about where development should occur. Open space can be private as well as public lands that can be used for recreational purposes including trails and parks, as well as wildlife habitat areas for viewing purposes. Some of the natural resources within an open space system that establish the basis for sustainable growth are farmland, floodplains, wetlands, ridges, forests, river corridors, scenic view sheds, and buffer areas.

As the President's (Clinton) Council on Sustainability noted, sustainable thinking helps “. . . to promote sustainable growth -- growth of jobs, wages, educational achievement, and time with family -- but not growth of pollution, poverty, commute times, and crime.” Generally citizens like and want “the jobs, tax revenues, and amenities that development can provide. But they want it without degrading their environment, unduly raising their local taxes or diminishing their quality of life.”



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**STRATEGY 1.1**

Inventory and map natural resources across the County, and categorize open space by function to identify areas of significance.

**Timeframe**

**SHORT TERM**  
INTERMEDIATE  
LONG TERM

Steps	Leadership Role (C/M/P)	Status (A/P/C)
Define criteria for evaluation of resources. (See Fact Sheets 1, 2, and 3)	C	A
Determine classification of areas of significance.	C	
Prepare base maps for community workshops.	C	



Leadership Role: C – County M – Municipality P – Partners  
 Status: A – Active P – Pending C – Complete

## Resources

### Documents

- ◆ **Fact Sheet 1: What is Open Space?**
- ◆ **Fact Sheet 2: Natural Resource Inventory**
- ◆ **Fact Sheet 3: Developing an Open Space Plan**
- ◆ **Natural Resource Guide** - A guide to using natural resource information in local decision-making.
- ◆ **NYS Open Space Plan.**

### Organizations and Programs

- ◆ **The Nature Conservancy Eastern New York Chapter** - [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org) or 845-858-2883  
The Nature Conservancy is involved in two landscape-scale projects in Sullivan County: the Neversink/Delaware River Basin Program and the Catskill Mountain Program.
- ◆ **The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Open Space Plan** - [www.des.state.ny.us/website/opensp/index.html](http://www.des.state.ny.us/website/opensp/index.html) serves as the blueprint for the State's land conservation efforts
- ◆ **The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development** - [www.catskillcenter.org](http://www.catskillcenter.org)  
The Catskill Center is a non-profit organization working to protect the cultural, historic, and natural resources of the Catskill Mountains
- ◆ **The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program** - [www.fia.fs.fed.us/](http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/)  
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service provides the information needed to assess America's forests. As the Nation's continuous forest census, the program projects how forests are likely to appear 10 to 50 years from now to evaluate whether current forest management practices are sustainable in the long run and to assess whether current policies will allow the next generation to enjoy America's forests.

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**STRATEGY 1.2**

Hold municipal workshops to verify and prioritize areas of significance within each Town and identify specific goals and objectives.

**Timeframe**

SHORT TERM

**INTERMEDIATE**

LONG TERM

Steps	Leadership Role (C/M/P)	Status (A/P/C)
Community to define their criteria for evaluation of areas of significance.	M/C	
Review County maps to identify areas of significance.	M/C	
Conduct a workshop to identify specific goals and objective pertaining to Open Space.	M/C	
Refine County map to reflect municipal priorities.	C	



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## Resources

### Documents

- ◆ **Conservation Capital: Sources of Private Funding for Land Conservation**
- ◆ **Conservation Capital: Sources of Public Funding for Land Conservation**
- ◆ **Fact Sheet 2: Natural Resource Inventory**
- ◆ **Fact Sheet 3: Developing an Open Space Plan**

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**STRATEGY 1.3**

Encourage towns to include open space into their comprehensive plans or to adopt their own open space plan based on individual objectives and needs.

**Timeframe**

- SHORT TERM
- INTERMEDIATE
- LONG TERM**

Steps	Leadership Role (C/M/P)	Status (A/P/C)
Provide training on role of open space in their community.	M/C	
Incorporate open space goals and objectives from previous strategy.	M	
Prioritize areas of preservation.	M	
Develop a plan that demonstrates how land will be conserved.	M	



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## Resources

### Documents

- ◆ **Local Open Space Planning Guide**, 2004
- ◆ **Fact Sheet 4: Open Space Preservation Objectives**
- ◆ **Fact Sheet 5: Open Space Preservation Techniques**
- ◆ **“Green-Based” Urban Growth: Next Wave of Environmentalism.** D.L. Parsell, National Geographic News, April 22, 2002
- ◆ **Conservation by Design** The Nature Conservancy

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**STRATEGY 1.4**

Adopt a Countywide Open Space Plan.

**Timeframe**

SHORT TERM  
INTERMEDIATE  
**LONG TERM**

Steps	Leadership Role (C/M/P)	Status (A/P/C)
Conduct countywide workshops to obtain public input.	C	
Define characteristics that provide high quality of life in Sullivan County.	C	
Define future open space needs based on future population growth.	C	
Determine priority actions needed to protect key open spaces.	C	



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## Resources

### Documents

- ◆ Local Open Space Planning Guide, 2004
- ◆ Orange County Open Space Plan.
- ◆ NYS Open Space Plan.

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- ◆ **The NYS Department of State Division of Local Government** - [www.dos.state.ny.us/lqss/](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lqss/)  
provides training and technical assistance to local governments and community organizations throughout the state and helps local officials solve problems involving basic powers and duties, public works, municipal organization, planning, land use and regulatory controls, and community development. One of the goals of the Division is to serve as a "one-stop-shop" for New York local governments. Local officials can request assistance through e-mail on this Web site.

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**STRATEGY 1.5**

Educate towns about techniques to balance open space preservation and development in their planning.

**Timeframe**

SHORT TERM

**INTERMEDIATE**

LONG TERM

Steps	Leadership Role (C/M/P)	Status (A/P/C)
Provide education and training to municipalities on the following techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership Option for Governments and Non-profits</li> <li>• Transfer of Development Rights et al.</li> <li>• Zoning Floating Zones &amp; Overlay Zones</li> <li>• Conservation Subdivisions</li> <li>• Development Fees or dedication of Open Space</li> </ul>	C/M	
Adopt applicable techniques as necessary on a community basis.	M	



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## Resources

### Documents

- ◆ **Fact Sheet 6: Creative Land Planning**
- ◆ **NEMO Open Space Fact Sheet T3**—Transfer of Development Rights: An Innovative Preservation Technique
- ◆ **NEMO Open Space Fact Sheet T2**—Conservation Easements
- ◆ **NEMO Open Space Fact Sheet T4**—Conservation Compacts: A Practical Approach to Natural Resource Protection
- ◆ **NEMO Open Space Fact Sheet T5**— Historic Overview: Subdivision Open Space Dedication
- ◆ **NEMO Open Space Fact Sheet T5a**—Open Space Dedication Regulations
- ◆ **Land Use and Planning Tools** RPA Connecticut
- ◆ **Open Space Planning Chart** Pace Law School
- ◆ **Environmental Regulation Case Digest** Pace Law School

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### Other

- ◆ [www.catskillalliance.org/index.html](http://www.catskillalliance.org/index.html)
- ◆ [ny\\_specs@yahoo.com](mailto:ny_specs@yahoo.com)
- ◆ <http://www.sustanhv.org/index.html>
- ◆ <http://www.greenmap.org/>
- ◆ <http://www.shawangunkridge.org/>