

Hudson Hills and Highlands

FOCUS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance – Winter/Spring 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.



In a few short weeks, vernal pools will be teeming with life!

New Directions for ELLA

As you have likely heard, Fred Koontz, Teatown's Executive Director and founder of ELLA, has left to take a position at the Woodlands Park Zoo in Seattle as VP of Field Conservation. Fred's heart was always in field conservation and we wish him well. His vision for ELLA was to create a group of well-informed public servants that were the driving force behind environmental conservation in their communities and throughout the Hudson Hills and Highlands.

The good news is that Fred was successful in creating ELLA and the group is stronger than ever with *110 members* representing 28 municipalities. We have sponsored a variety of educational workshops and hosted a state-wide conference for Conservation Committees/Boards. However, this is no time to rest on our laurels; we have created a strong foundation, now we are poised to make ELLA even stronger.

One of Fred's goals for ELLA was to have a direct impact on regional conservation. To accomplish this, ELLA will begin to focus more on providing the training and support for members to implement conservation initiatives in their communities. This has already started with the stream conservation initiative. ELLA members are restoring riparian buffers, developing watershed management plans, implementing water quality testing, and creating educational signage in their communities. The upcoming ELLA workshop on **Critical Environmental Areas** (CEA) will continue this approach and has been designed so that individuals who attend will receive all they need to know to designate CEAs in their municipalities. *If you would like to register for the March 5 workshop, please RSVP to ybeldotti@teatown.org by February 28.* We hope that this new focus for ELLA will help affect change in communities and create a more sustainable Hudson Hills and Highlands.

Update! ELLA's Stream Conservation Initiative

We are excited to announce that 12 municipalities will be receiving funding to begin work on a stream conservation project through **ELLA's Stream Conservation Initiative**. These include: Irvington, Mt. Kisco, Sleepy Hollow, Pleasantville, the Village and Town of Ossining, Peekskill, Yorktown, Pawling, Somers, Bedford, and Carmel. The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) will be providing technical support and 50% of project funding for the municipalities that occur within the Croton Watershed. Projects include buffer restorations, water quality testing, the development of watershed management plans, and the development of educational materials. We are very excited about the great response and the eagerness of these groups to "get dirty" and do some hand on conservation in their communities! We'll keep you posted over the year on their progress.



Save the Date! ELLA Spring Workshop on Saturday, March 5

Have you ever wanted to have a lasting impact on conservation in your community? Do you know what a Critical Environmental Area (CEA) is? At this ELLA workshop we will discuss what CEAs are and how you can utilize this tool to protect the most environmentally-sensitive places in your community. We will present a brief overview of CEAs and the process by which they are designated. Laura Heady of the Hudson River Estuary program will discuss how her agency can assist municipalities with identifying ecologically-important lands. Emily Svenson, a CAC member from Dutchess County will describe how her group navigated this process successfully designating 2,600 acres in their town as CEAs. This workshop will provide you with all the tools and know-how so that you can go back to your municipality and enact your own CEAs.



Grasslands at Croton Point, A regionally-rare habitat type.



We Need Your Support!

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.

We have also encouraged **Village and Town Board** members as well as **Planning Board** members, a number of which have expressed interest, in being part of this regional initiative.

Registering is easy and the yearly membership is **FREE**. To sign-up, simply visit the ELLA website at www.ellahh.net and select **How to Join**.

We hope that you will consider joining ELLA or renewing your commitment. Membership helps us to obtain the necessary funding to keep the program going.

Thank you for your continued interest in our efforts and for the time and service you provide to the communities in which you serve.

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 ellahh@googlegroups.com

If you are interested in leading a "peer-to-peer" workshop in your area of expertise, please contact Yvonne Beldotti ybeldotti@teatown.org or call (914)-762-2912 ext. 120.

