



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

156 Ramapo Valley Road • Mahwah, NJ 07430 • T 201.512.9348 • F 201.512.9012 • www.nynjtc.org

January 2008
For Immediate Release

Contact: Edward Goodell
201.512.9348, ext. 12
Goodell@nynjtc.org

NY-NJ Trail Conference's East Hudson Community Trails Program Will Add to Hiking Trails in Westchester and Putnam Counties

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's new East Hudson Community Trails Program will be inaugurated this year, thanks to a \$100,000 challenge grant from Westchester resident Dr. Lucy R. Waletzky and a match in the amount of \$30,000 by the Westchester Community Foundation. The trail initiative is designed to expand the Trail Conference's capacity to provide assistance to local trail programs in Putnam and Westchester Counties.

The Trail Conference plans to hire an East of Hudson Field Coordinator early in 2008. The field coordinator, with support from existing professional staff, will tailor and deliver a range of trails-related services in Putnam and Westchester Counties according to local needs.

Trail Conference Executive Director Edward Goodell notes that the Community Trails Program builds on the Trail Conference's nearly 90 years of experience in working primarily in regional park systems, such as Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks, and on long-distance footpaths such as the Appalachian Trail and Long Path. "In recent years we've seen an increase in requests for our services from local municipalities and non-profit land owners," he notes. "With the explosion of development in our region, open space preservation has become a priority for many. Since well designed and constructed foot trails are the most economical and environmentally sensitive ways to provide public access to open space," he says, "many agencies have contacted the Trail Conference for advice and help. This generous support from Dr. Waletzky and the Westchester Community Foundation will enable us to develop the capacity to respond to more of these requests and to make it possible for more people to get out and connect with nature close to home."

Westchester County Parks Commissioner Joseph Stout said, "The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a true asset to us in county parks. Their trained volunteers do wonderful work clearing and blazing trails, installing water bars to prevent erosion, and much more. I am pleased that this grant will allow them to have a presence in Westchester County, and I look forward to our continuing partnership."

Brenda Bates, Senior Curator for Ward Pound Ridge Reservation of Westchester County Parks, the county's largest park with 35 miles of trails, has been working with the Trail Conference for more than a year. "It's been amazing to me that through the Trail Conference we have developed a core of volunteers who come regularly, are committed, and are real friends to the park," she says. "And with improved trails, other things become possible through the Trail Conference—trail maps, guidebooks. All of this makes a huge difference for a park. It helps get people pumped up about getting out and visiting these places."

Dr. Fred Koontz, executive director of Teatown Lake Reservation in Ossining, which already supports the Trail Conference as a member organization, sees the grants to the Trail Conference as opening opportunities for local residents. "There is an increasing interest in hiking and trails in Westchester County, both for nature appreciation and for health reasons," he notes, citing concerns over obesity. Further, he says, "We at Teatown see new trails as mechanisms for improving the ecological connections between parks. That is very important to us. But there is a shortage of professionals to advise park personnel and volunteers about trail routing and building. The Trail Conference has that expertise."

Dr. Lucy Waletzky chairs the New York State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Taconic Regional Commission. She is a long-time member of the NY-NJ Trail Conference. The Westchester Community Foundation (WCF) is a non-profit community endowment for the benefit of Westchester County. Its mission is to develop and manage philanthropic resources, and to distribute them in a way that is responsive to donor interests and community needs. The Foundation actively promotes charitable giving on behalf of the area's non-profit organizations. WCF is a division of The New York Community Trust, the largest community foundation in the country with assets of approximately \$2 billion.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference builds, maintains, and protects hiking trails in the NY-NJ Metro region and educates the public about their responsible use. It is a coalition of 100 clubs and 10,000 individuals that supports and tends a network of 1,700 miles of trails, primarily through volunteer effort.

###