



2010 Executive Director's Report to Stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

2010 has been a very productive and significant year for Catskill Mountainkeeper.

Among other achievements we have:

- Increased our members by the thousands
- Expanded our staff to include Aaron Bennett as our Regional Director in Delaware, Greene and Ulster counties
- Became an independent 501C3 public foundation
- Raised the money necessary to fund our programs
- Launched major campaigns, especially dealing with gas drilling, that have been effective and have gotten national attention for the issues.

We have become the leading advocacy organization in the Catskills. We are the feet on the ground, the canary in the coalmine and the first responders. We are out there every day listening, educating and advocating for the people throughout the Catskills. We can accomplish so much because we marry the energy, core competency and effectiveness of our staff with the activism of many other local grassroots organizations with whom we work collaboratively. We have developed strong working relationships with government at every level and can effectively sit down and work constructively for the benefit of our region.

While our work this year has unquestionably furthered our core mission of protecting, promoting and enhancing the natural beauty, economy, wildlife for the people of the Catskills, there is much, much more to be done in 2011 and beyond. The immediacy, importance and the size of the gas drilling threat has in many ways dwarfed all the other significant issues and opportunities facing the Catskills – especially in the area of sustainable development. So in this report I am going to make a special effort to highlight the other issues that will shape our future.

The Catskills is now at a crossroads. What we do right now and in the next few years will determine what our region will be like for decades to come. It is our choice to make whether we will sensibly and strategically utilize our natural resources, natural beauty, close proximity to one of the largest economic markets in the world and develop the extensive talent pool we have or choose to become a highly industrialized area with a great risk of substantial water, air and health problems leading to declining quality of life, tourism and agriculture industries.

None of the work we have done this year would be possible without the critical support that people like you have provided. I want to personally thank you so much for your help. But before we close the books on 2010 and as you consider causes that are worthy of your end of year donations, we would appreciate your giving serious consideration to making a gift to Catskill Mountainkeeper. Our work is still 100% funded by individual and foundation contributions.

If you have any questions about this report or anything else related to the work we are doing, please call me at 845 482-5400.

GAS DRILLING UPDATE

The possibility of gas drilling using the highly controversial hydrofracking technique that sends water and toxic chemicals under high pressure deep within the ground to extract natural gas, continues to be the #1 threat to our region. Catskill

Mountainkeeper, along with our national and local coalition partners have continued to turn up the heat on the gas industry and government officials and have been successful in raising awareness of the issues and problems with gas drilling as it is currently being proposed.

Unfortunately, we continue to be the underdogs, fighting against the richest industry on the planet that has been waging a very aggressive high spending campaign to promote their agenda.

In other parts of the country the oil and gas industry has gotten their way, but in New York they found that the public will not accept turning major portions of our state into poorly regulated, under-monitored, highly industrialized areas and is not willing to take unwarranted risks with our water, air and health. We were not given much chance of any success when this fight started, and while we still have a long, hard uphill battle before us, we are making very good progress.

Here is some of what we've accomplished so far this year:

- The Lobby Day and rally we spearheaded in January in Albany was an emotional and strategic turning point on the issue of gas drilling as 600 strong braved cold and inclement weather to tell State legislators that we don't want gas drilling using hydrofracking until it can be proven to be safe. This was the first of many rallies and lobby days we helped organize and participated in during the year.
- In May as a result of incalculable hours of working the halls of Albany, making phone calls and leveraging thousands of citizen emails, we and our coalition partners got the frequently inert state Senate to vote across party lines for a moratorium on drilling permits until May 2011 and we are now hard at work getting the Assembly to follow suit.
- We organized and launched a "Drilling Isn't Safe" Communications Campaign with a coalition of Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy, Damascus Citizens, Earthjustice, "Gasland, the Movie" and NRDC. We have put up 2 billboards on Route 17 with the slogan "And They Said it Couldn't Happen in the Gulf Either", printed lawn signs which are now dotting the Catskills, distributed thousands of buttons that showed up in newspaper photos and on television and more.
- We played a critical role in convincing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to do a study of the impact of hydrofracking on drinking water and through our organizational efforts helped make the EPA hearings in Binghamton, NY by far the most widely attended in the nation with over 400 speakers and 1215 attendees.
- Successfully brought the issue of gas drilling to the attention of national news media resulting in feature stories on CNN, in Fortune, the NY Times and much more.
- Successfully made the issue of gas drilling using hydrofracking a pivotal issue in the 2010 election cycle.
- Attended hundreds of events in New York State and the surrounding area to testify, speak and educate people about the problems with gas drilling using hydrofracking.
- Partnered with the Sullivan County Planning office to host Gas Drilling Forums
- Submitted comments to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the problems with gas drilling using hydrofracking.
- Rallied our base of over 12,000 e-activists through our Action Alerts
- Hosted dozens of showings of "GASLAND, the Movie", a hard-hitting documentary by Josh Fox that graphically shows the dangers of hydrofracking.
- Actively fought against the Draft Strategic Plan for State Forest Management released by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) that could allow for high volume hydrofracking on a thousand square miles of state forest. The plan would permit up to one well pad every 80 acres and could result in thousands of wells.

What's Next for Gas Drilling

Catskill Mountainkeeper will continue to lead the fight advocating to protect New York State from unsafe gas drilling. As we enter 2011 things are changing quickly. We have a new Governor and we may soon have a new DEC Commissioner. Our first task is to educate them about the "Dirty Side" of gas drilling, the side that is being whitewashed

by a skillful and well-funded media and lobbying campaign the gas industry is waging. Our experience has clearly shown that when we educate people about the real impact gas drilling using hydrofracking will have on public health, our water and our air, they join us in demanding that drilling not commence until it can be proven to be safe.

We will continue to vigorously oppose hydrofracking in the Delaware River Basin, the source of drinking water for millions of people. The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), a state/federal partnership that controls 13,539 square miles from Delaware County in New York to the Delaware Bay has announced plans to open up this land to hydrofracking, clearing the way for up to 30,000 wells to be drilled. With our coalition partners we are laying the groundwork for a legal challenge to stop them.

We are fighting this fight locally, regionally and nationally. We are working with other groups, with our constituents, with government and the press. We will continue to work until our region and our state has proper protection against the kinds of health, environmental, infrastructure and quality disasters that have accompanied gas drilling utilizing hydrofracking everywhere else it has been implemented.

CASINO DEVELOPMENT

The threat of multiple casinos in the Catskill Mountain region, while momentarily quiet is still very real and vigilance regarding this issue is critical. Catskill Mountainkeeper is keeping our finger on the pulse of this complicated and constantly changing issue.

Efforts to build a casino in Queens at Aqueduct Raceway heated up this year raising the possibility that developers might be less interested in the Catskill Mountains if a casino was built in New York City, however the Aqueduct project is large, complex and relies on many hard to predict variables, so negotiations between the tribes, developers and state to build casinos here goes on.

LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND RIDGETOP PROTECTION

Catskill Mountainkeeper is acting as a catalyst to bring a regional perspective to development within the Catskills so we don't look back in 20 years and lament the unnecessary destruction of our natural beauty and heritage as well as opening the gates to the heightened potential for flooding and erosion. We are working to make sure that there is a balance between economic opportunity and the protection of our unique and vulnerable environment.

An important part of this initiative is to highlight the economic value in ridge top and hillside protection that supports aesthetically pleasing development while ensuring the integrity of our mountainous landscape. Catskill Mountainkeeper is partnering with the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and the Catskill Heritage Alliance and has formed a working group whose mission is to identify, articulate, conserve, and enhance the aesthetic, spiritual, environmental, and economic values of mountaintops, ridges, and scenic view sheds in the Catskills.

Together we are holding a "summit" in June 2011, and will be doing multiple pre- and post-events around the following themes:

Visioning – Highlighting the examples set by towns and counties within our region that have taken a proactive approach to resource protection, such as the regulations set up by the Town of Warwick to preserve farms and farming heritage; the ridgeline protection regulations that are in effect in the Town of Hardenburgh and the partnership of the town and land trust in the Town of Woodstock.

Stewardship – Providing private landowners with critical information about what they can do to protect their land and their local environment such as conservation easements, enrolling in the 480A forestry program, top ridgeline protection techniques, and more.

Economic and Cost of Service Studies – Reviewing the conclusions of relevant local studies that detail the positive economic impact of protected ridgelines and view sheds on the local economy and the prohibitive costs of developing in remote areas often characterized by steep slopes, thin soils, etc.

“Trails & Travels” – Focusing on the importance and abundance of trails to our eco-tourism industry, many of which run along ridges and summits.

Revitalization of Working Landscapes – Showing how farming can be done profitably by highlighting the newer specialized niche farms that have been successful and the need for a more effective forest management plan.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CATSKILLS

The proponents of bringing drilling for natural gas to our area constantly put forward what they call its economic benefits. The get rich quick allure of leasing land for drilling is an understandable attraction for those of us who have sustained long-term financial hardship that comes from the lack of economic growth. The strong desire to avoid the risks of gas development by others of us, as outlined earlier in this document, is equally understandable. This has set up neighbor against neighbor conflict in our region as never seen before.

The options that have been put forward so far are between the short term windfall from gas drilling vs. continued underdevelopment, under investment, lack of strategic planning and a continuance of the lack of growth over the last 40 years or more. Based on research and profiling success stories in other regions, Catskill Mountainkeeper powerfully believes that there is another option. The Catskills can create the economic development we need through sustainable growth that will not put our land, water, and our people at severe risk.

We are blessed with the natural resources, the natural beauty and a unique location that can lead to a transformation of our farming industry into a foodshed for the New York Metro area and beyond, the expansion of our eco-tourism industry and the creation of a robust low impact business and industry sector.

Catskill Mountainkeeper is actively serving as a catalyst bringing together government, educational institutions, not-for-profits focusing on sustainable development and regional business leaders to turn theory into practical application in the Catskills on a timely basis.

The major projects we are actively working on include:

BRINGING AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING TO THE CATSKILLS

Catskill Mountainkeeper is bringing together high-level stakeholders of a major university, the Center for Discovery and our local 2-year colleges to work out the details to bring an institution of higher learning to the Catskills. The talks are focusing on a curriculum featuring health care, agriculture and the arts, industries that have tremendous potential in our region. The benefits of this to our region will be a better, more skilled workforce that will fuel growth in our leading sectors, higher earnings for our residents and a source of increased intellectual capital.

ADVANCING THE CATSKILLS AS A FOODSHED FOR NEW YORK CITY

The Catskills, once the home of a thriving dairy industry is now home to threatened and abandoned family farms that are facing few options, none of them good. Catskill Mountainkeeper is spearheading a “Foodshed Project” whose goal is to turn our underutilized farms into the producers of the vegetables, meat, cheese and fruit that New York Metro market’s discerning consumers are demanding. This will reinvigorate farming so that it will once again be a major contributor to the Catskill’s economy. We see this as the perfect marriage of supply and demand that will become a never-ending revenue stream for our economy. Servicing the huge market in New York City is a tremendous opportunity for which the Catskills is uniquely qualified given our fertile land, the availability of existing farms and our proximity to the metro area. It fits hand and glove with the fundamentals of the rapidly growing national local farm movement that emphasizes eating food that is grown or raised within 100 miles of where it is consumed.

Our first step in making this a reality was to partner this year with the Earth Institute at Columbia University to study organic farms in the western Sullivan County Catskills along the Upper Delaware. Researchers analyzed the existing local agricultural production; the long-term opportunities to expand production; and the impact of growth on carbon footprint issues involving food production and transport.

The study focused on 4 case studies of farms producing cheese and vegetables that have been successful in non-traditional ways. It looked at their work practices, why they are successful and how what they do compares to industrial agricultural and energy use. While the study focused on a discrete geographic area, the research information was created to serve as a model for application elsewhere within the Catskill, Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions. The conclusions of the study will be made available to farmers, consumers, business leaders and politicians.

What's Next on the Foodshed

With our partners, The Open Space Institute (OSI) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), we will launch an effort to make farming profitable with initiatives such as:

- Connecting potential new farms to existing farms with tillable land through a farm brokerage system that would identify farms that are no longer being operated and match them up with young farmers, immigrant farmers and other people who want to farm.
- Train experienced and new farmers on how to establish and profitably run organic operations, what crops are the most in demand and bring the highest economic return as well as how to bring these products to market.
- Build the infrastructure that will support the industry such as:
 - A cheese processing facility and creamery that would take the raw milk that farmers cannot sell today for a profit and turn it into specialty cheeses and dairy products that are highly profitable
 - A mobile butchery/travelling meat processing plant
 - A distribution center and transportation services that will make it easy for farmers to get their produce to market

CURRICULUM PROJECT

Catskill Mountainkeeper has undertaken a project to create the framework of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary educational curriculum of Sullivan County's cultural and natural environment so that our youth can learn about and understand their local and regional heritage. The goal of this curriculum is to give our young people the background, knowledge and tools they will need to assume the responsibility of successfully taking our region into the future. We have partnered with Sullivan Renaissance and the Roscoe Central School District to create a pilot project that can be expanded to the whole county and possibly the whole region.

The curriculum will be based around the following themes:

- The unique and special characteristics of the region's environment
- The interaction of humans on the environment, and the effects and impacts of that interaction over time
- Definition and examples of sustainable development such as agriculture and forestry, entertainment, recreation, industry, etc.
- An understanding of how our youth are being handed a legacy and how their actions, or inactions will impact the future of the region

BARNFEST

On July 31, 2010, Catskill Mountainkeeper held its Second Annual "Barnfest" at the Adams Compound in Beaverkill, NY. We brought together more than 600 people to hear about the important issues facing our region, to celebrate to the music of Jay Ungar and Molly Mason and the Stoddard Hollow Band and feast on locally raised food. Almost 100 people contributed their art, music, products skills and energy to make Barnfest a huge success. Featured speakers included Mark Ruffalo and Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org.

Barnfest has quickly become the region's premier environmental event, celebrating the unique assets of the Catskills, building community spirit and advancing sustainable growth in the region.

AND THERE'S MORE

In addition to our efforts to protect the Catskills and promote sustainable growth, we are actively bringing people closer to the land and educating them about where they live and its value. Our activities include hikes throughout the region, educational seminars and special events that celebrate the Catskills.

As I said at the beginning of this report, 2010 has been a year of significant achievement and 2011 will be a year of even greater challenges and opportunities. I think you'll agree we have demonstrated what we can do with your support. Unfortunately we can do very little without it. So if you have already made a donation to the Catskill Mountainkeeper this year, again thank you. It is truly appreciated. If you can consider making another meaningful gift, that would be of great importance. If you haven't yet made your contribution this year, please take a moment and do so now.

In addition to your contribution please consider volunteering your time and skills.

I am available anytime to answer your questions, discuss your opinions or talk about the future of the Catskills, a passion we both share.

Cordially,



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Catskill Mountainkeeper is an activity of the Open Space Institute, Inc.