



# Catskill Mountainkeeper 2018 Program Report



## THESE ARE YOUR VICTORIES



**Powering our Green Energy Future:** Mountainkeeper's RenewableNY program made a big splash in speeding New York State's transition to a clean energy future through our ambitious three year Solar Outreach Initiative, which wrapped up in early 2018. This model campaign helped nearly 750 homeowners and small businesses in 15 New York State communities go solar, and encouraged more than 150 people to sign up to get power from shared solar farms, adding a total of over 6.3 MW of solar energy to the grid. We are building on this momentum through a new 2 ½ year HeatSmart Ulster•Sullivan campaign to fast-track the adoption of clean heating and cooling technologies—along with energy efficiency and weatherization improvements—in two New York counties where Mountainkeeper has a strong presence and deep relationships.

**Documenting Fracking's Health Impacts:** March 2018 saw the release of the updated 5th edition of the Compendium of Scientific, Medical, and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking—co-authored by Mountainkeeper's Senior Research Director Kathy Nolan, MD. This vital document is the scientific underpinning for all of Mountainkeeper's work to fight our dependence on fossil fuels, and a critical tool for Mountainkeeper's fracking allies across the country. Findings from the 5th Compendium were featured in a major March 2018 article in Rolling Stone magazine.



**Protecting the Peekamoose Blue Hole:** This summer, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and The Catskill Center implemented a free permit system to control access at the Peekamoose Blue Hole—a beautiful swimming hole that was being overrun by visitors. Mountainkeeper helped sound the initial alarm alerting decision-makers and the media about the degradation of this sensitive area due to overuse, and our team put forth and supported the permit idea as a good way to strike the balance between keeping wild places accessible to all while protecting them from being loved to death. Early results suggest that the permit system is working well to decrease degradation at the Blue Hole, and Mountainkeeper continues to work with the NYSDEC to tailor the system to meet the needs of the public while continuing to protect water quality and the ecological integrity of the site.



**Helping Farmers in Crisis:** Every day, our region's small farmers face an uphill battle to produce products sustainably. Our small family dairy farms have suffered for years as a result of a dysfunctional national milk pricing system and the rise of industrial megafarms that flood the market with product, driving prices below production costs for most small farms, along with other stressors. The crisis has reached major proportions, with many of our small farmers on the brink of losing everything. This summer, Mountainkeeper responded by launching **FarmHearts**, a partnership with Bethel Woods, Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County, and Sullivan Renaissance, to support and protect small family farms, the backbone of life in the Catskills for generations. In addition to raising awareness, FarmHearts has established a small grant program for emergency relief, stop gap measures, or other agricultural projects that will help keep family farms viable and operating while longer term solutions are sought at the state and federal levels. FarmHearts also offers information and referral for technical assistance and other resources that support small farms.





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**Protecting our Hemlock Stands:** Mountainkeeper is taking a stand and fighting the invasion of the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), a voracious insect that is attacking hemlock stands and threatening the entire Catskills ecosystem, including our world-class fisheries. Mountainkeeper has been raising awareness about the crisis, advocating for resources, identifying and reporting infestations that have since been treated, and supporting the New York State Hemlock Initiative as it implements solutions like introducing beneficial predator species. Our advocacy efforts supported a \$500,000 appropriation in this year's state budget for invasive species experts; we produced a short video earlier this summer to help shine a light on this threat; and we are enlisting people to act as citizen scientists by downloading and using an app that allows smartphones to report the GPS location and other info about HWA infestations to state officials.

**A New Rail Trail for the Catskills:** We are pleased to report that construction recently began on the new Ashokan Rail Trail, an 11.3-mile long, world-class multi-purpose trail along the northern border of the Ashokan Reservoir. Mountainkeeper advocated for this important new recreational resource for years as part of the Friends of the Catskill Mountain Rail Trail, and we will participate in its stewardship once the trail is complete sometime in 2019. This effort is part of Mountainkeeper's broader work to help stave off pressure for development of wild lands and protect open spaces by promoting our region's spectacular outdoor recreational resources and boosting ecotourism, including through our Trailkeeper.org website.

**Protecting the Delaware River Basin from Fracking:** Mountainkeeper helped advocate for the permanent fracking ban in the Delaware River Basin that was included in the Delaware River Basin Commission's (DRBC) November 2017 draft regulations. We have since fought to keep the Basin—the source of drinking water for 17 million people—equally safe from harmful fracking-related activities like water withdrawal for fracking, waste transport and storage. We helped spur more than 40,000 public comments in early 2018, and have been working to birddog the regulatory process, raise awareness, spread compelling new scientific information about hidden toxic fracking practices in PA, and urge Governor Cuomo and other decisionmakers to support a complete ban in advance of December 2018, when the DRBC will release the final regulations.



**Keeping a Tar Sands Boiler out of Albany:** For years, Mountainkeeper and our allies have been fighting plans by Global Partners to build a massive boiler that would likely process tar sands oil at the port of Albany right next to an environmental justice community. Tar sands oil is some of the dirtiest oil on earth. It takes a tremendous amount of energy to produce, is next to impossible to completely clean up in a spill, and releases dangerous toxins when burned. In a huge victory, in May 2018 Global Companies announced that it was backing away from the project, which would have threatened the Hudson River and its communities with pollution, explosions, and spills, and endangered the health and safety of people living in the low-income Ezra Prentice Homes next door. The facility also would have fueled the oil and gas industry's efforts to turn Albany into a major east coast oil hub.

## Keep in touch!