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# The Pound Ridge Land Conservancy Green Spaces

Non-Profit Organization

— Preserving Pound Ridge Lands Forever —

Spring 2009

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## Our Mission

The Pound Ridge Land Conservancy is a private, non-profit corporation, with the mission of preserving the rural character of Pound Ridge through the conservation of undeveloped land. The Conservancy's preserves are kept in their natural state for aesthetic, ecological and education al purposes. The preserves are held in perpetuity.

## Save the Dates

**Armstrong Work Sessions**  
every Saturday  
10am-12pm  
**Preserve Walks/Talks**  
See schedule inside

## Our Woodland's Health

The Land Conservancy is embarking on yet another exciting adventure. For our February board meeting, we had the pleasure of meeting forester, Andrew Hubbard of the Watershed Agricultural Council. With Andy's help, your land conservancy will be studying the health of our preserves' forests and putting a plan in place to manage their health over the long term.

First some history to set the context...Prehistorically, the New York landscape was dominated by forests, mostly Northern Hardwoods. These forests were healthy and nature was in balance. Natural disasters took place that allowed trees to grow at different rates so the forests were comprised of seedlings to old growth trees. Until 1880 that is. At this time, the forests were cleared for agriculture leaving only approximately 25% of the land forested. Trees were cleared for lumber, charcoal, pasture



This section of the Bye Preserve is an example of an 'even-aged' forest

and food crops. The landscape changed drastically in a very short period of time. The trees also suffered from major insect and fungal infestations. By the early 1900's, many of these cleared lots were abandoned, allowing trees to again begin to flourish. However, ultimately, what was created was an 'even-aged' forest. Currently, the majority of trees we see are only one hundred or so years old. During this time, the trees have been competing with each other for sun, water and other nutrients. Today, newer tree growth, or pole saplings, are overshadowed by older trees which prevent them from flourishing. Add to this lack of age diversity, severe deer browse and invasive plants which limit new tree regeneration. Bottom line: our woodland ecosystem is critically out of balance. When was the last time you noticed any

tree seedlings in the woods? They are nearly non-existent. The health of our forests is dependent on allowing pole saplings to grow and flourish. Eventually, older trees will die off. Unless these pole saplings are thinned, they will die due to over-competition. It's difficult to think of our forests slowly dying, but that is what is happening along with the wildlife that call them home. Remember, in nature, everything is connected.

Now that we have set the stage... Your land conservancy will be putting in place a plan to manage our forest growth and health. In the next month, we will be hiking at least one of our preserves with Andy to conduct what he calls a 'physical'; to determine the health and appropriate actions needed to create,

over the longer term, healthy and productive woodland habitat. (A video will be made of this walk and posted to our website). By

creating a grid-type model we will have the ability to pin-point where, for example, a majestic oak has the ability to re-seed smaller oaks and where, through a program of thinning and protection, these oaks, which supply nourishment to a variety of critters, can propagate and flourish over future generations.

In no event are we suggesting a full-tilt program to denude the forest of heritage-sized trees. Instead, we hope to put in place a variety of action plans to stimulate smaller tree growth and survivability. The success of this program, now and in the future, will depend on help from interested Pound Ridge residents. We hope you are up to the task! Funding is available both to private land conservancies and private landowners with parcels of significant size.

## FAMILY VACATION DESTINATION

*Explore the wonders of Pound Ridge*

**Take** your family on a discovery walk in a preserve  
**Find** ways to be a "green" family  
**Adopt** a Preserve

**Try** out your skills at the Armstrong House  
**Learn** about the flora and fauna through **PRLC ED**  
**Take** photos for our website and send them to us

To find out about more activities and opportunities, please go to our website at [www.prlc.net](http://www.prlc.net)



[www.prlc.net](http://www.prlc.net)

### Board of Directors

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Carolin's Grove

Halle Ravine

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Thalheim

Isaacson

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Goldfein

Robert Whitehead

Armstrong

Schwartz

*The Pound Ridge Land Conservancy is a 501 (C)(3) non-profit organization*

## President's Message....

Your local land conservancy continues to explore new realms of stewardship in keeping with our mission of conserving Pound Ridge land for its ecological, aesthetic and educational purposes. This spring, our volunteer board stewards filed their annual reports on the status of each of our 14 preserves totaling over 335 acres in town. Large groupings of invasives were identified, any neighbor encroachments were noted, and changes in the health of the preserve were identified. Our new forest management program just getting underway is part of assessing the overall vitality of our preserves and is meant to begin an inquiry for all of us into how best to manage our woodlands and other native habitats.

Did you know that forests impact our local climate by keeping the air cooler and more humid and that forests affect the cycling of air, water and nutrients? For example, forests maintain water quality and quantity as they capture, store and help purify rainfall, stormwater and groundwater. Forest plants use carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and replace it with oxygen.

flowers grow only on the forest floor - over-abundant deer population - and interior of forests whose habitat remain fact- those decaying leaves you remove port a rich and diverse community of living organisms can thrive. Our region's biodiversity is under siege.

Did you know that 35% of New York State's native plants, vertebrate animals and ecosystems are in jeopardy of extirpation with nearly 10% presumed to have already been lost? In response, your land conservancy is expanding its outreach not only to land-owners who may want to protect their land through outright gift or conservation easement, but to each resident to become a land steward of those small pieces of the land mosaic we call home.

We want to thank each and every one of you for supporting our work. Our fundraising was down \$5,000.00 in 2008. We hope this year those of us who can contribute financially will do so- perhaps in slightly larger gifts- to compensate for those who can't. If you can not afford a financial gift, your volunteer time and energy will support us in just as important ways. We urge you to contact us about our many initiatives and know that once working on any one of them, you will become increasingly inspired.

Elyse Arnow Brill, President

May 2009

**“Our region's biodiversity is under siege.”**

Indeed, some of our most treasured wild-when they haven't been nibbled by our many species of birds nest only in the unbroken by roads and development. In from the forest edges of your yard sup- life which breakdown nutrients so other

## Armstrong-Richard's Trail Opening...Join Us!

Please join us on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup> from 4-6 p.m. as we formally open the Armstrong-Richards walking trail which coincides with our spring open house at the Armstrong House. Take a tour of the restoration in progress. This new trail runs through 18 acres of pristine woodlands of the Richards Preserve located off Honey Hollow Road, through an additional 18 acres owned by the DEP and continues through the 43-acre Armstrong Preserve trail system to end at

the Land Conservancy's off-the-grid future land steward's home, the Armstrong House Project perched high over the reservoir and Rt 121 just south of the Reservation. This new trail system can be accessed at the Richard's Preserve's small parking area off Honey Hollow Road or by a short hike up the drive into the Armstrong Preserve. Very limited parking is available at both locations.

### *Here are Ways to Support Local Land Preservation:*

**Become** a new PRLC Member

**Renew** your existing membership

**Give a gift** supporting land preservation to honor a friend or family member, as a memorial donation, a birthday recognition, or a holiday gift and we will send an acknowledgement

**Attend** a board meeting to share your ideas

**Volunteer** for trail maintenance or blaze a new trail

**Help** by picking up a hammer to renovate the Armstrong House

## Armstrong House Project Update

Full-speed ahead for the build-out of this new community resource despite the faltering economy. With now over 850 volunteer hours on the part of a dedicated team of community residents and high school students, this 1912 home is beginning to take a new shape. No, the structure is not being enlarged, or the foot-print dramatically changed as so often happens with traditional renovations or restorations.

Power tools now run by energy generated by our solar panel display mounted cliff-side for optimum sun exposure, heat on those still chilly mornings is created by our highly efficient wood-burning stove with cell foam insulation



The Armstrong House as it looked this past April

and custom made storm panels reducing heat loss. A foil-faced vapor and wind barrier will keep drafts at bay and re-used siding stripped off a home slated for demolition in Darien is about to get put up to complete the exterior. Inside, work goes on in preparation for closing in the walls with a 'green' alternative to sheet rock. Our energy subcommittee is analyzing a low or no-carbon powered back-up heating system as well as rain water harvesting to supply toilets and laundry.

Why the focus on 'green' technology for this off-the-grid home? The answer lies in the fact that the residence will be the future home of a land steward and will enhance the PRLC's volunteer land stewardship and educational capabilities. What is a land steward? It is someone who has the expertise through formal education and experience to manage land to ensure that natural systems are maintained or enhanced for future generations. A land steward cares for

the natural system as a whole -- understanding the fundamental roles and values of natural systems -- incorporating an understanding of the ecological cycles on the landscape (water, energy, nutrients) and how land-use practices can either benefit or negatively impact these cycles. A land steward practices resource conservation maximizing efficiency and striving to reduce the one-time consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. Her goal is to maintain, build and enhance these natural systems to encourage biological diversity needed for habitat sustainability. Certainly there are cultural values and ethics underpinning the work of a land steward.

As Aldo Leopold wrote, "A land ethic then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity..." The creation of the Armstrong land steward's home will give the land conservancy and our community a focal point and facilitator for the study of conservation and land use practices. This is the gift of the Armstrong House. Pragmatically, our land steward will work in the Land Conservancy's 14 preserves as well as on other protected land in Northern Westchester and be a connection between and among conservation groups and initiatives. She will lead talks and walks and conduct community education initiatives for all age groups.



Our new solar panels are fully functional

The house itself will be an educational prototype of 'green' living that can be updated and expanded as new technologies emerge. It is our hope that through these opportunities, we can all become land stewards. The Pound Ridge Land Conservancy is on the cutting edge of local land conservancies' thinking, practice and action and, as such, we hope you will support our work.

## PRLC Calendar of 2009 Walks/Talks

Join local naturalists and PRLC Board members for a series of guided walks. Children welcome.

- May 31<sup>st</sup>** Sun. 10am Join Naturalist Brenda Bates in monitoring the eight vegetation plots at the Clark Preserve. We will be identifying tree and plant growth in each meter plot to determine over the longer-term the rate of re-growth due to the Town of Pound Ridge Deer Management Program. Brenda will discuss what we hope to see and why it's important to understand deer-browse impacts in the life-cycle of the forest.
- June 6<sup>th</sup>** Sat. 10am Join us for a walk in the Clark Preserve with Andrew Hubbard to assess the state of the health of this woodlands and make initial program recommendations to the Land Conservancy for a forest management program.
- June 14<sup>th</sup>** Sun. 4-6pm Join us for the grand opening of our Richards-Armstrong trail in conjunction with our spring Open House event at the Armstrong House project site. Introductory walk will leave promptly at 5 p.m. and showcase the Armstrong Preserve Loop And the Richards trail. New maps will be available. Meet at the Armstrong House project site. Park at the base located off Rt 121 just north of the causeway and hike up to the house. See the article in this issue for more details.
- Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>** Sun. 10am Join Naturalist Brenda Bates at the Halle Ravine Preserve to establish vegetation monitoring plots. Plots will be randomly selected and plants and trees within the meter plot will be identified and recorded.
- Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>** Sun. 2-4pm Join Naturalist Rick Rogers at the Ward-PR Reservation shelter located at the end of Michigan Road for fire-roasted marshmallows and hot drinks. Learn about the history of the Reservation and the work of the civilian conservation corps before heading out for a guided walk.

## Give online - Website updated

Have you checked out our website lately? We've updated it with some very handy features...

Our "Home page" will give you up-to-date information on alternatives for conserving your land and the possible tax benefits.

Our "Preserve Pages" highlight the preserves and welcomes you to our walking trails. Each of our six preserves with trails have downloadable maps, directions and a description of what you will see.

Our online calendar lets you know when we are working at the project site of the Armstrong House, having a board meeting or inviting you to an event.

Our "Support Us" page now lets you contribute by credit card and make a membership contribution or give a gift honoring someone important in your life for their birthday, as a holiday gift or just plain for the fun of it!

Our "Backyard Pages" introduce you to materials you may be

looking for on topics important to land conservation and natural resource protection. Calculate your footprint or take the Energy Star Yardstick Quiz. Are you planning a vegetable garden this year or hoping to 'green' your yard by planting native or non-invasive plants, moving away from pesticide applications for your lawn or, are you interested in finding out more about rain gardening?

Our goal for these backyard pages is to make this a local destination for all sorts of information. We hope you will contribute links and materials you find online to this growing and vital community resource. Please email us at [info@prlc.net](mailto:info@prlc.net) and attach your links, articles, blog posts and other resources you find in your online travels and we will add them.

On these pages you will also find a collection of photographs taken by Pound Ridge folks as they meander the Land Conservancy's preserves and their own backyards. We will showcase one of these photos every quarter on our Home Page.

### Upcoming Preserve Walks/Talks

May 31 <sup>st</sup>	Clark Preserve
June 6 <sup>th</sup>	Clark Preserve
June 14 <sup>th</sup>	Richard's-Armstrong Trail Opening
September 13 <sup>th</sup>	Halle Ravine Preserve
October 25 <sup>th</sup>	Ward-PR Reservation

### Armstrong Open House

Sunday, June 14th, from 4—6PM

### Armstrong House Work Sessions

Every Saturday 10AM—12PM  
Check the website for the schedule



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