

Town of Clinton volunteers work on local environmental issues

By Marsha Leed

Clinton is a small town of about 4,000 in north central Dutchess County that has a dedicated volunteer group of residents working hard to promote and protect the local environment. The Town of Clinton Conservation Advisory Council has five members with a diversity of experience and interests.

Jen Cavanaugh is the chairwoman and the Town Board liaison is Frank Venezia. The council members are Norene Collier, Sarah Love, Barbara Mansell and Bill Relyea. The Conservation Advisory Committee acts in an advisory capacity and frequently coordinates its activities with other town agencies. Members are appointed by the Town Board for two-year renewable terms. Members regularly consult with the Town of Clinton Planning and Zoning boards on environmental aspects of pending projects.

An important focus of the Clinton council has been to bring awareness to the issue of protecting water resources since all town residents rely on groundwater wells. Members have prepared Global Information System maps and developed recommendations to protect groundwater aquifers, wetlands, lakes and riparian areas. The council has worked with the Town Board to develop regulations to protect bodies of water, offered reduced-cost well testing to local residents and helped test streams for pollutants. The town passed a Water Protection Zoning Amendment in 2008.

Clinton residents attend meetings of the Wappinger Inter-municipal Council to encourage the protection of the Wappinger Creek, tributaries and watershed. Working with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Cary Institute, water testing has been completed on tributaries of the Little Wappinger, Fallkill and Crum Elbow Creeks. Conservation Advisory Council members have planted trees along riparian corridors in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation to develop better stream protection.

Council members have worked with other town volun-



Children in Clinton make use of the nature trail for bird watching. COURTESY PHOTOS



The Clinton Conservation Advisory Council hosts a variety of nature activities for children and adults

teers to update the Comprehensive Plan and have obtained grant funds to allow Clinton to develop Open Space and Farmland Protection Plans. The Farmland Protection Plan was passed in 2010 and a Farmland Protection Board has been appointed. The Open Space Plan was adopted in 2012 and the council was appointed to implement this plan.

The Conservation Advisory Council obtained grant funding to allow Hudsonia to create habitat maps and biodiversity analysis of the town. The completed project was presented to the Town Board in February.

The council has encouraged the town to make its historic Town Hall and associated historic buildings energy efficient and install geothermal heating and cooling. That major construction project is almost complete. The town has installed solar panels on the highway garage with the en-

couragement of the council and plans to install more.

New residents of the Town of Clinton receive "welcome folders" from the Conservation Advisory Council that include information about town services, as well as advice on how to maintain a septic system, protect drinking water wells and information on local environmental resources. The council recently donated a thermal leak detector and two energy use meters to the Clinton Community Library to be added to its circulation to help residents (and all those in the Mid-Hudson Library system) increase their energy awareness and efficiency.

The Clinton Conservation Advisory Council's Nature Trail Subcommittee has been busy improving the town's nature trail in the floodplain of the Little Wappinger Creek north of the Town Hall.

The council recently planted native vegetation and installed benches, bird boxes

ON THE WEB

For details on how to get involved in your town's Conservation Advisory Committee, look for information on your town's website or the Environmental Management Council's website at <http://dutchessemc.org>.

and informational tree signs. Many of these improvements are the result of donations from local residents and a Boy Scout Eagle Scout project. Residents and visitors are encouraged to use the nature trail for bird watching and hiking.

Clinton residents are encouraged to attend Conservation Advisory Council meetings at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the renovated schoolhouse next to the Town Hall. Interested volunteers are welcome.

There are 19 Conservation Advisory Committees in Dutchess County. All of them work in partnership with the Environmental Management Council. Since its formation in 1972, the Dutchess Environmental Management Council has been the county's official citizen advisory board on matters that affect the local environment.

Marsha Leed is a registered architect, a LEED accredited professional and a member of the Dutchess County Environmental Management Council.