



# Town of New Paltz

**Neil Bettez, Town Supervisor**

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February 15, 2018

Land Trust Accreditation Commission

Attn: Public Comments

36 Phila Street, Suite 2

Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Dear Commissioners:

We are writing in support of Mohonk Preserve's application for accreditation renewal through the Land Trust Alliance's Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

Tourism represents an important part of the local economy of New Paltz, enhancing its vitality and vibrancy. Visitors to the Mohonk Preserve frequent our retailers, restaurants, farm stands, art galleries, and many other businesses. The Preserve's Foothills Connectivity Initiative, the site plan of which was approved by the New Paltz Town Planning Board in 2016, will help visitor's experiences in the Testimonial Gateway, Humpo Marsh, and on the way toward the Shawangunk Ridge. The Ridge is a popular destination for many out-of-town visitors, as well as locals who also take advantage of the spectacular scenery and the opportunity to spend time in nature.

The Shawangunks are one of the Hudson Valley's leading attractions, supporting 358 local jobs, drawing well over 500,000 visitors each year, and generating over \$12.3 million in regional revenue and over \$459,000 in local sales tax (from 2010 study). Mohonk Preserve itself – the State's largest nonprofit nature preserve, employing over 50 people – hosts more than 200,000 visitors annually from all over the world who come to the Preserve to enjoy nature study, hiking, trail running, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and world-renowned rock climbing.

Since 1963, the Preserve has identified and protected over 8,500 acres of key recreational areas, fragile habitats, and scenic viewsheds through strategic acquisitions and conservation easements, working with their members, partners, and supporters to raise millions of dollars in funding for land transactions, stewardship, and endowments. We commend the Preserve for their efforts to raise private donations, primarily from individuals, that are invested in publicly accessible natural infrastructure in the Town of New Paltz, and which connects to the Village of New Paltz's vibrant downtown.

Mohonk Preserve is an anchor community-based institution that promotes conservation in accessible ways that make the Town and Village of New Paltz a hub and a gateway of the amenity economy. We strongly support their candidacy for Land Trust accreditation renewal.

Sincerely,

Neil Bettez

Supervisor, Town of New Paltz