



# Town of New Paltz

**Neil Bettez, Town Supervisor**

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August 25, 2016

Mark Castiglione, Acting Executive Director  
Hudson River Valley Greenway  
625 Broadway, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Mr. Castiglione:

I am writing to express support for Mohonk Preserve's grant application to the Hudson River Valley Greenway for the Foothills Interpretive Signage Project, which seeks to enhance trail user experiences in the Shawangunk Mountain Foothills.

This stunningly beautiful scenic landscape lies entirely within the Hudson River Drainage Basin and includes the iconic Romantic-Era Testimonial Gateway, ecologically valuable Humpo Marsh, idyllic historic farms, and extensive carriage road network leading to higher elevations on the Shawangunk Ridge. This area has long been accessed informally by New Paltz residents and the visiting public. In 2017, MP will begin implementation of a recently approved site plan for two trailheads providing formalized, controlled, and ADA-compliant public access to this popular destination. In direct alignment with Greenway Conservancy Criteria for Educational and Interpretive Projects, the interpretive signs will enhance trail user experiences by engaging them in the area's rich cultural heritage, rich ecological value, and the efforts of MP and conservation partners to protect and provide access to these treasured natural lands.

This interpretive signage project is part of Mohonk Preserve's broader Foothills Connectivity Initiative, which is designed to enhance the accessibility and attraction of a premier Hudson Valley environmental, recreational, and economic asset. The Shawangunks are one of the Hudson Valley's leading attractions, supporting 358 local jobs, drawing 500,000 visitors each year, and generating \$12.3 million in regional revenue and \$459,000 in local sales tax. Mohonk Preserve alone – the state's largest nonprofit nature preserve, employing over 50 people – hosts more than 165,000 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.

Tourism represents an important part of the local economy of New Paltz, enhancing its vitality and vibrancy. Visitors to the Preserve frequent our retailers, restaurants, farm stands, art galleries, and many other businesses. The Foothills Interpretive Signage Project will help to enhance trail user experiences in the Testimonial Gateway, Humpo Marsh, and on the way toward the Shawangunk Ridge, which 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.

For these reasons, the Town of New Paltz is pleased to support this proposal and urges the Hudson River Greenway to give due consideration to funding this important project.

Sincerely,

Neil Bettez  
Supervisor  
On behalf of the Town Board