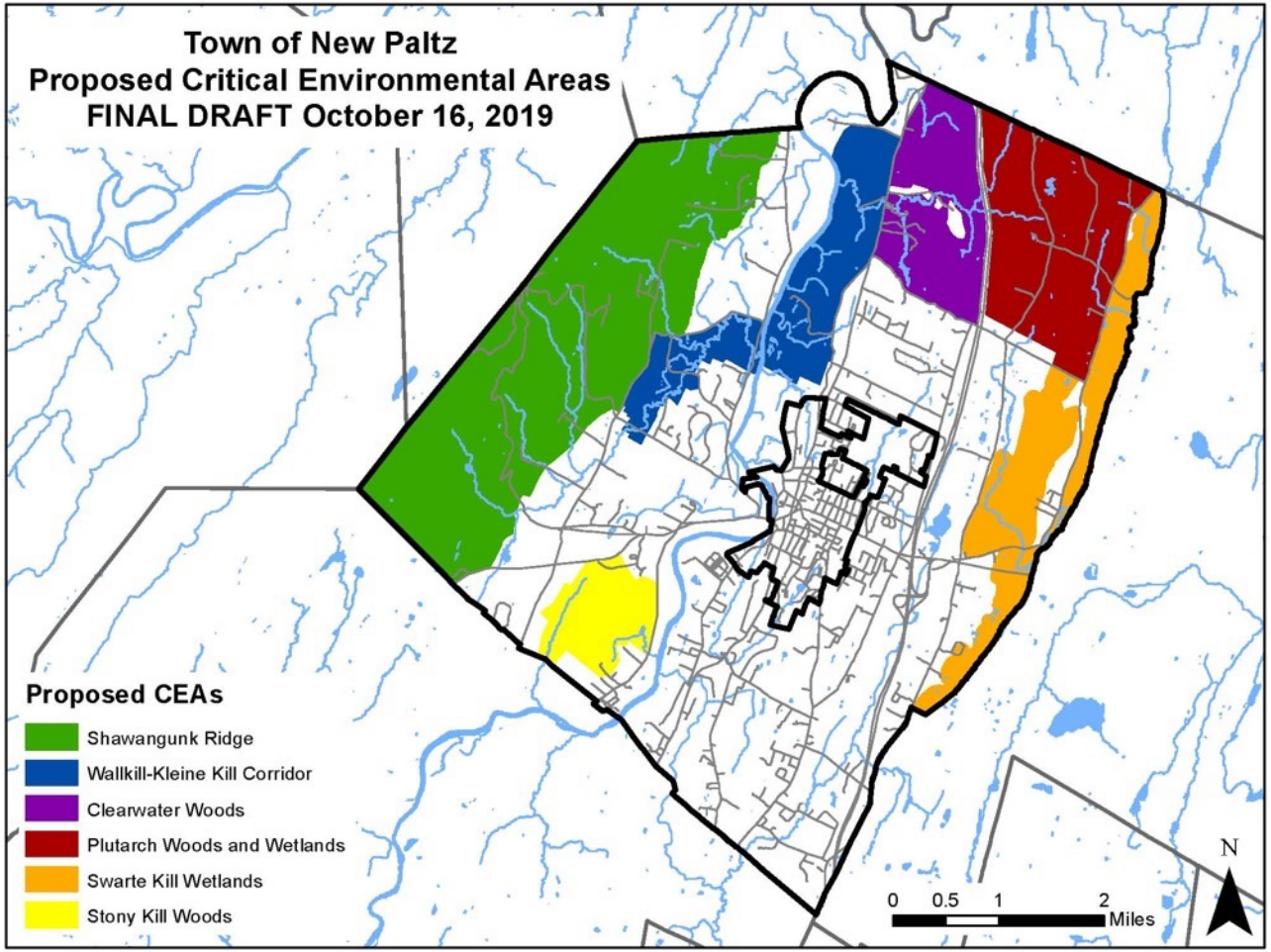
Critical Environmental Areas for New Paltz

A Proposal by the Town of New Paltz Environmental Conservation Board

May 6, 2021


Town of New Paltz
Proposed Critical Environmental Areas
FINAL DRAFT October 16, 2019
Proposed CEAs
Shawangunk Ridge
Wallkill-Kleine Kill Corridor
Clearwater Woods
Plutarch Woods and Wetlands
Swarte Kill Wetlands
Stony Kill Woods
0 0.5 1 2
Miles
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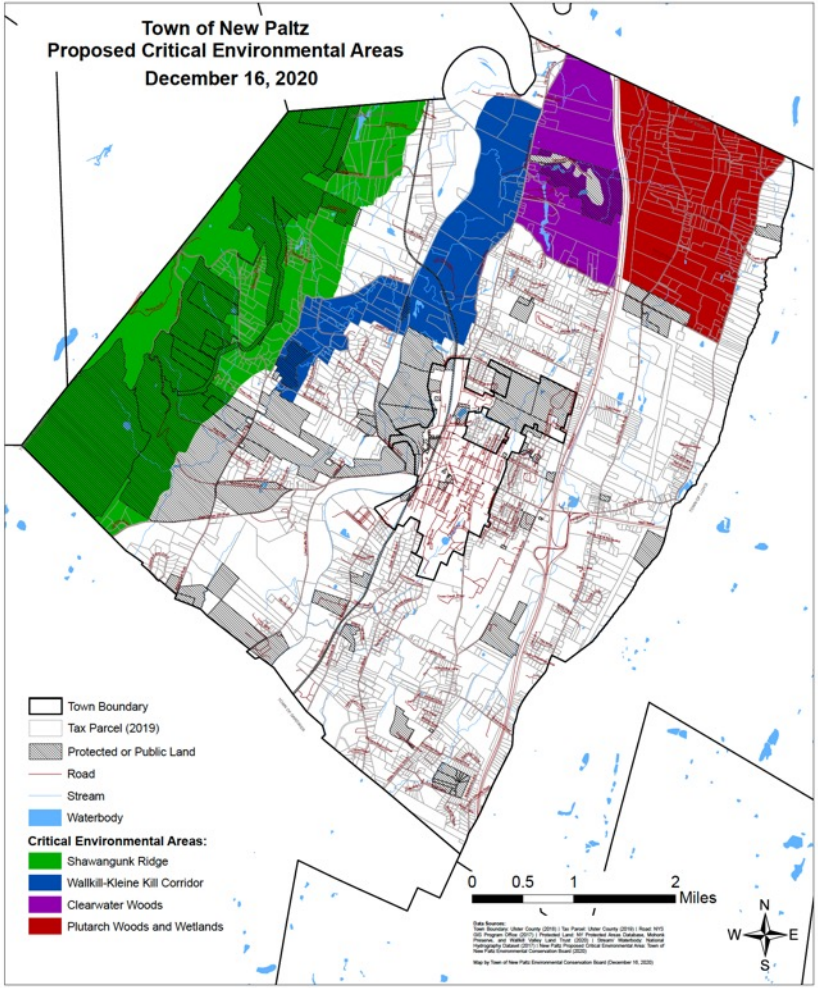
Town of New Paltz
Proposed Critical Environmental Areas
December 16, 2020
Town Boundary
Tax Parcel (2019)
Protected or Public Land
Road
Stream
Waterbody
Critical Environmental Areas:
Shawangunk Ridge
Wallkill-Kleine Kill Corridor
Clearwater Woods
Plutarch Woods and Wetlands
0
0.5
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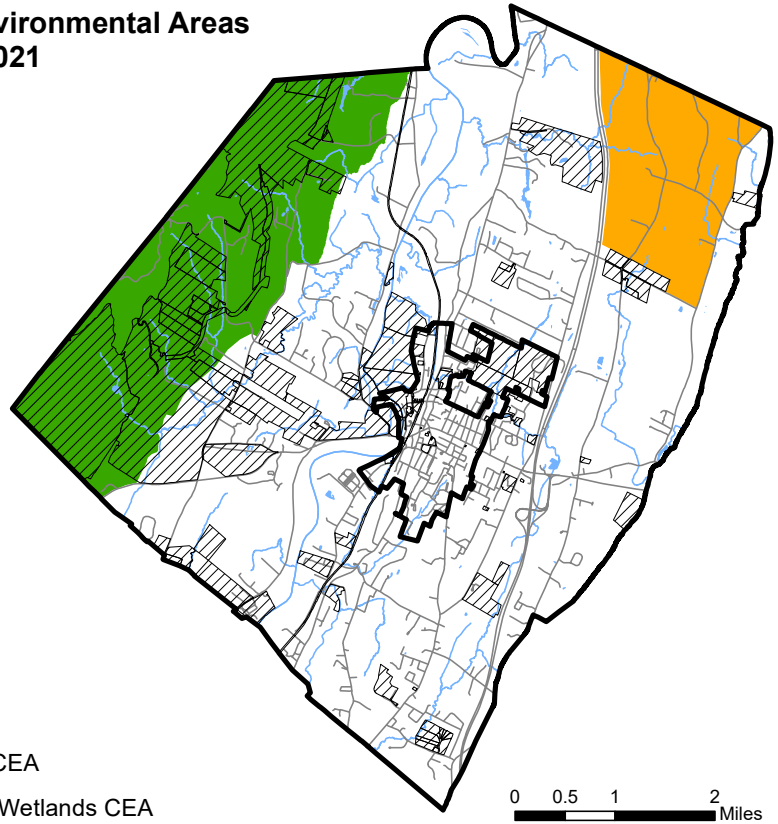
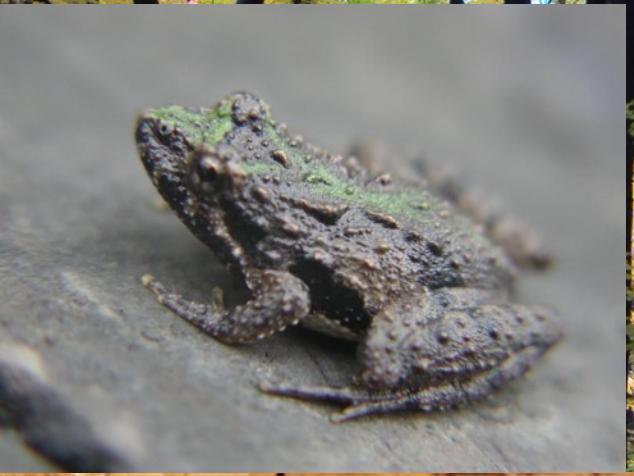
Town of New Paltz
Proposed Critical Environmental Areas
May 2021



Shawangunk Ridge

- State and Town priority area
- Significant Biodiversity Area
- Significant forest area
- Drinking water protection
- High climate resilience
- Scenic, historic, and recreational asset

Plutarch Woods and Wetlands



- Significant Biodiversity Area
- Significant forest area
- High quality wetlands
- Endangered species habitat
- High climate resilience

Which projects will be affected?

Large projects (e.g., >10 acres of disturbance), subdivisions, and “unlisted” actions go through SEQR, which requires consideration of impacts to CEAs.

Activities of most landowners are unaffected, such as building a house, garage, or minor accessory structure, landscaping maintenance, or farming.

Recommended Procedure (the EnCB can assist)

- Use pre-application meetings
- Review the CEA description
- Look at maps in the NRI
- Consider the scope and magnitude of the action
- Determine whether more information is needed

New Paltz Natural Resources Inventory

Link to NRI Report

Town of New Paltz New York

Introduction | Physical Resources | Water Resources | Wildlife and Habitat Resources | Climate Resiliency | Cultural Resources | Land Uses

New Paltz contains a high level of biological diversity of both regional and local significance. A habitat is the place where an organism or population lives or where a biological community occurs. It is defined by both its biological (plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and non-biological components and their interactions with each other. The non-biological components include features such as sunlight, moisture, slope, soils, soil or water chemistry, and bedrock substrates. The viewer is encouraged to zoom out to see the full extent of some of these features and how New Paltz ties into a larger system.

Expand the gray box at right to view/select layers to display on the map. Available layers include the following:

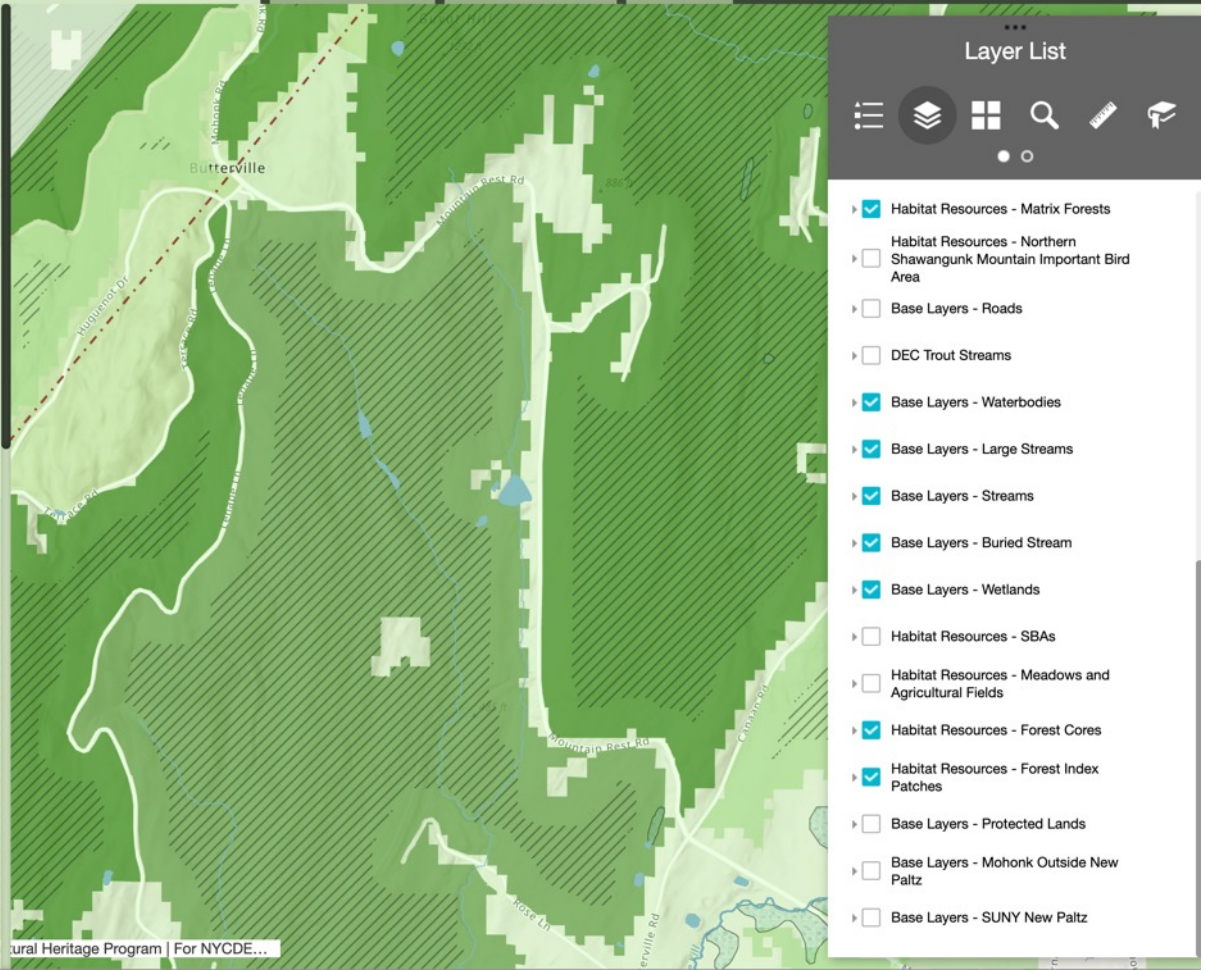
Important Bird Areas: The National Audubon Society and their partners have identified over 2,800 areas important for birds in the United States encompassing 417,403,683 acres (National Audubon Society 2006). These are sites that provide an essential habitat to one or more species for breeding, wintering, or migrating birds.

Matrix Forest Blocks: These are large contiguous areas of forest whose size and natural conditions allow for the maintenance of ecological processes, viable ecological communities, and plants and animals that cannot necessarily persist in smaller or poorer-quality forests. They are considered important habitat for interior forest species and represent the best example of viable matrix forest. Matrix Forest Blocks were delineated by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP).

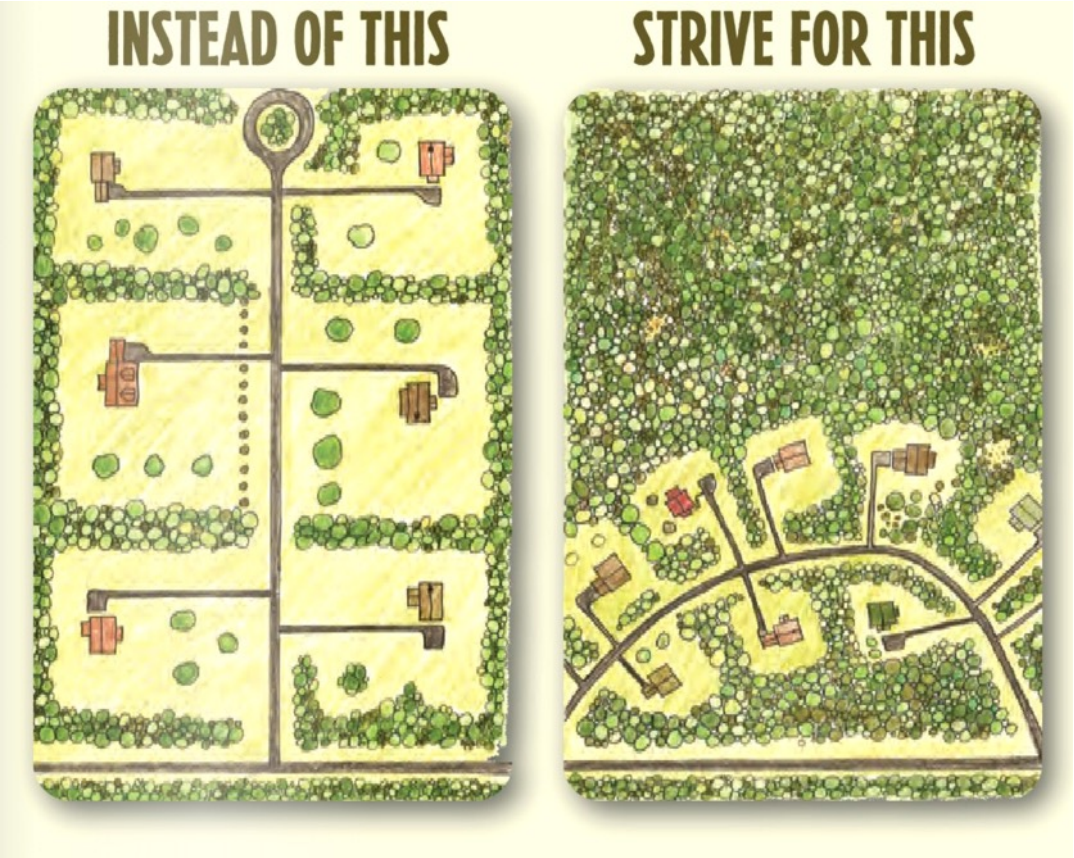
Forest Linkage Zone: These are areas, delineated by TNC and NYNHP, that link Matrix Forest Blocks, and are thus important for maintaining ecosystem health, ecological connections, and travel corridors.

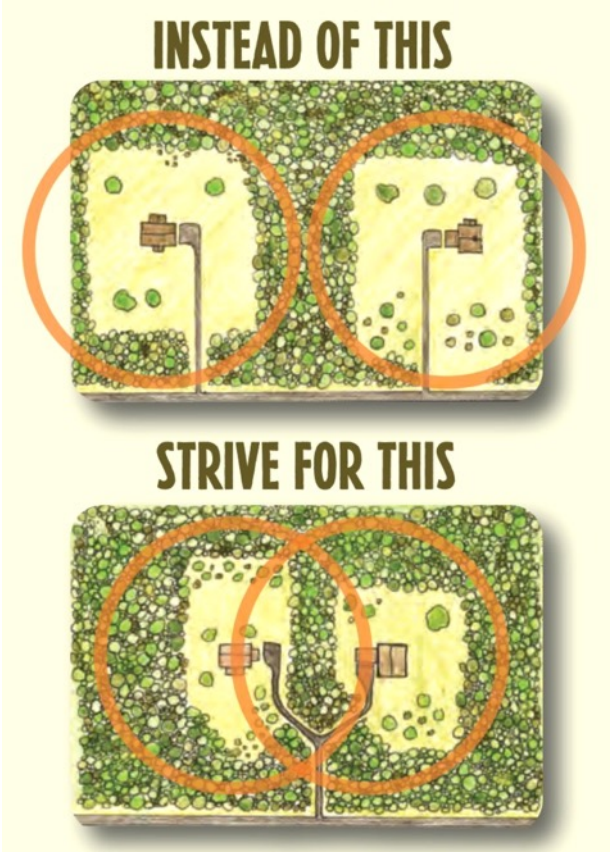
Significant Biodiversity Areas: These are locations of high concentration of biological diversity or value for the regional biodiversity in the Hudson River estuary watershed. Significant Biodiversity Areas (SBAs) were identified by the DEC Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell University. As a set, The 23 SBAs account for much of the range in biodiversity found in the region but should not be interpreted as the only important areas within the region. SBAs are defined by unique topography, geology, hydrology, and biology that distinguish them from neighboring areas.

Northern Wallkill Biodiversity Areas are locally important habitats that contribute to the unique biodiversity in New Paltz. The pop-up box



Utilize Conservation Analysis and Design





The Open Space Plan Provides Guidance

Conservation Analysis: A Four-Step Design Process

This technique for area planning, subdivision planning, and site planning employs a design approach that places primary importance on the resources and natural setting to be conserved as the first step in the design process. Contrary to the typical process, in which lots, homes and roads are laid out and the remaining area (if any) is considered open space or natural lands, **this process begins by identifying the important natural and cultural features for protection.** The process includes several major steps, as outlined below:

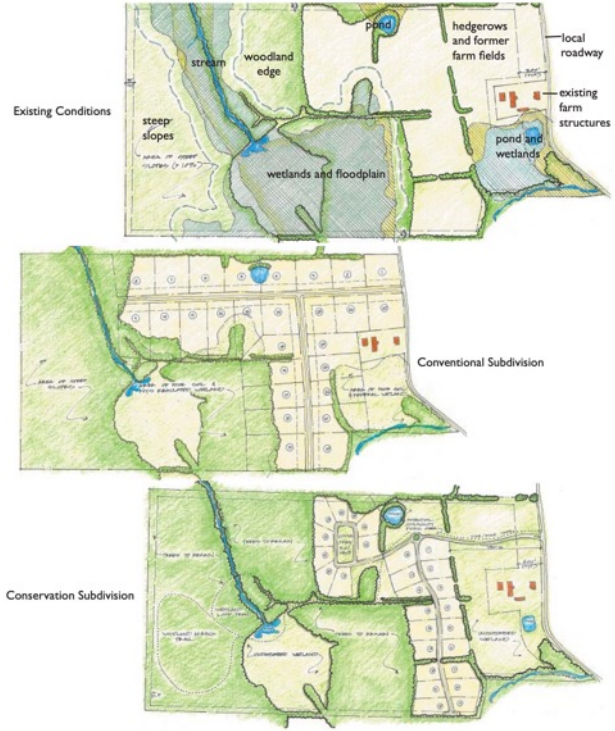
1. **Create a conservation analysis map (or maps) identifying the site's most important resources and features**, such as important wildlife habitat, streams, wetlands, farms, and historic homes. In addition, a map that indicates how the site relates to major regional features, such as wildlife corridors, greenways, trail linkages, and historic landscapes, for example, should be created (regional context map).

This conservation analysis map illustrates the site's most important features (such as farm fields, farmsteads, streams, wetlands, meadows, and important views) and identifies conservation and development areas. This analysis should help to inform development and infrastructure configurations in a manner that respects the most important landscape features.

2. **Determine the site's conservation and development areas.** This step involves an important judgment process in which a thorough analysis leads to identification of the most important resources for protection – these are the conservation areas. The remaining area is the development area.

3. **Identify a proposed layout for development that complements the conservation areas** (conservation design). This process should result in the protection of important open space and landscape character, as well as the creation of functional public open space and attractive residential development that is an asset to the community.

4. **Synthesize conservation and development concepts into a draft concept plan** including detailed location of trails, preserves, houses, and streets.



Above: This example shows an existing site's primary conservation features (top), a conventional subdivision (middle), which does not take into account these features, and a conservation subdivision (bottom), which is based on the conservation analysis process. In the conservation subdivision example, the homes are clustered on smaller lots and the woodlands, wetlands and associated stream are conserved. Homes are set back from the main roadway to protect the roadside views and the existing hedgerows are extended as screening. Additional amenities such as trails are provided in appropriate locations within the conserved areas.

Acreage and percent of Town

Total acreage: 5,604 acres (27% of Town area)

(No commercial zoning)

Acreage excluding protected land: 3,282 acres (15.8%)

The CEA designation does not protect land.

It does not create a regulation.

It requires consideration of information already present in Town land use plans.

In the words of the public…

Next Steps

- Public hearing
- SEQR
- Town Board resolution
- File with DEC – takes effect after 30 days

Thank you

Contact: encb@townofnewpaltz.org