

Croton Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC)
Yearly Report 2023

Dear Mayor Pugh, Village Manager Healy and Village Board of Trustees,

Thank you for this opportunity to present the following synopsis of the Croton Conservation Advisory Council's activity for the year 2023. As you will see, we have had a very active year. If you have any questions, please contact me for clarification.

Thank you,
Janet Monahan
Chair Conservation Advisory Council
jmonahan205@gmail.com
914-271-1057

Dark Skies: Dark Skies is the affect lighting has on nocturnal animals and vegetation. It is also referred to as Light Pollution. Via a referral from the village board and the engineer's office, CCAC has created a Dark Skies sub-committee. Janet reached out to Scott Levine, a past member, who has expertise in this field. He will be an advisor on this initiative. Education and outreach will be the first steps in combatting this issue. Eva Thaddeus, who has presented to the fifth grade in the past, will educate the students on this initiative.

Solar Energy Local Law: The Village Board referred the Solar Energy Law to CCAC. The committee reviewed the current law, the NYS Model Solar Law and the current Town of Cortlandt Solar Law. John Ealer along with suggestions from Janet Monahan, drafted CCAC comments. Steven Krisky, CCAC Planning Board Liaison, and CCAC member Eva Thaddeus met to review with an eye towards The Planning Board. Members of the committee met to review the draft between scheduled meetings. They made their suggestions. At the November 1, 2023 regular meeting, the members of the CCAC approved the comments. Janet then emailed the document to Village Manager Bryan Healy.

Repair Café: Creating a Repair Café was first discussed in 2019 prior to the COVID shut down. However, it was consequently pushed off until this past February. Janet and Sherry Horowitz visited Yorktown's Repair Café in January to gather information. With Earth Day fast approaching, we began in earnest over the summer to create a Repair Café in Croton. We contacted Suzie Fromer, coordinator Repair Café Hudson Valley, to learn what would be required for Croton to start a Repair Café. We attended many information Zoom meetings to learn as much as possible. Sherry contacted the Town of Cortlandt to gauge their interest in also participating. In October we did have a meeting with the Town and decided to join forces. Croton would have one in June and December and the Town in March and possibly September.

Repair Café was held on Saturday, December 9. We had 16 Repair Coaches, 12 Volunteer Staff. 69 people attended and 91 items were brought in for repair. The event was very well received. We did make a list of suggestions for next time, which we will implement. We are looking forward to scheduling another Repair Café in late Spring.

Croton Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC)
Yearly Report 2023

Earth Day: Earth was restructured this year. Instead of the event falling on a few, committees were formed (food vendors, publicity, vendors and entertainment). Everyone chose which committee they wanted to be a part of. We did have a number of first time participants, but unfortunately, we had heavy rain that day. Earth Day had to be cancelled. Consequently, 2024 will have a rain date. Earth Day 2024 is scheduled for Saturday, April 27, 2024 with a rain date Saturday, May 4, 2024.

Tree Ordinance: CCAC has agreed to comment on the Tree Ordinance and make recommendations to improve. At the December meeting, a committee was formed to compare and contrast Croton's regulation to the Town Of Greenburg's Tree Ordinance.

Natural Resource Inventory (NRI): . Creating an NRI will improve the village's standing as a Climate Smart Community thus increasing obtaining grant money from the state. Establishing an NRI and an OSI are directed by the state. After the initial attempt at securing a grant from the state, Chris Kehoe, Department of Planning and Development, Town of Cortlandt, is reapplying for the grant. Janet sent Chris a letter of support and cooperation on behalf of CCAC. In November, Janet attended a meeting with The Town of Cortlandt CAC and Chris regarding the NRI. A member of the Peekskill CAC who spearheaded their NRI was there and presented their procedure in creating the NRI.

Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers (GPLB): Terry McGardy and Michael Balter continue to monitor other municipalities in Westchester County regarding their GPLB regulations. Terry, Janet and Sherry met with Jesse Bourdon, Croton Free Library, to discuss the violations by their landscaping company. CCAC is still concerned with the lack of violations issued. We feel that until violations are issued, people will continue to ignore the regulations.

Green Living Series: At the November meeting we decided to restart the Green Living Series. It has been dormant since COVID. The series will now be held at the Municipal Building. This will allow for live streaming and recording the event. At the 125th Anniversary Boat Parade, Caroline Randal Curvan, co-author of *Croton Point Park*, asked if she could present at a Green Living Series. Other topics will be Co-existing with Coyotes Regan Downey regan@nywolf.org WCCs Education Program, and the Dark Skies Initiative.

Spotted Lanternfly: Spotted Lanternflies have been seen throughout Croton, especially along the river walkway from Half Moon Bay to Senasqua Park. Westchester County has offered municipalities the use of a vacuum that they purchased for the removal of Spotted Lanternflies. John Ealer, a CCAC member, volunteered to accept and be trained on the vacuum in late October. C.L.E.A.N. is the lead sub-committee on this task.

Bruce Laemmel Memorial: Eva Thaddeus met with village officials to determine placement of the Memorial Garden for Bruce. It was decided that outside the fence at Senasqua would be the location. Three serviceberry trees were planted by the DPW. Eva also purchased a variety of bushes and crocuses. They are planted outside the park in an alcove along the sidewalk by the sailing school. Rachel will set-up a watering schedule. A plaque was purchased and attached to a boulder. On September 9 a dedication ceremony was held, attended by Bruce's family, village officials and village residents.

Croton 125th Anniversary Boat Parade: Janet Monahan was requested by Joel Gingold on behalf of the 125th Anniversary Committee to present at the July Boat Parade information regarding the Croton Point Landfill. With the assistance of Marc Cheshire and the Historical Society, Janet researched the

Croton Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC)
Yearly Report 2023

information and created a presentation. Janet presented information regarding the history of the Croton Landfill at the Boat Parade. It was very well received and she will be presenting it again at the Yacht Club River Day on Sept. 9 with Croton 125. Rachel Bernstein arranged for Caroline Ranauld Curvan, co-author of **Croton Point Park**, attend the boat parade. She answered many questions. Caroline would like to present at a Green Living Series.

Yacht Club River Day: On Sept 9, Janet presented the information regarding the Croton Landfill at the Yacht Club River Day. Many attendees came by the presentation and asked questions.

Village Newsletter: CCAC established *The Conservationist Corner* in the Village monthly newsletter. This will serve as an educational series regarding pertinent conversation issues.

Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (FCWC): Brendan McNamara and Tracy Stora from Federated Conservationists of Westchester County attended the September meeting to inform CCAC of what is happening at FCWC. Tracy is in the process of organizing a discussion group of the county CACs. They would meet and discuss initiatives and current topics. CCAC supported this idea and said we would participate.

Janet attended the FCWC reception for Westchester County Conservation Advisory Councils and Sustainability Committees. She was able to speak to members of other committees throughout the county. At this event Janet met Nancy Drain, Town of Greenburgh CAC, who helped update their Tree Ordinance. Nancy emailed Janet a copy of their new tree ordinance. This is in preparation of Croton updating their Tree Ordinance. Since this meeting both the CCAC and Sustainability have joined the FCWC.

Sub-Committee Reports

Garden Club/Pollinator Pathways: Eva Thaddeus reports the following:

The 2023 season of the Croton Garden Club included the following activities:

- Upkeep of public gardens at PVC, CHHS, and Cleveland Avenue median strip.
- Receptions and garden visits at the homes of 3 members
- Workshops on garlic growing and herb growing, taught by garden member Marjorie Anderson.
- Workshop on winter sowing, co-sponsored by the Garden Club and the Croton Rec Department, and co-taught by Joanna Straub and Eva Thaddeus
- A field trip to Untermeyer Garden
- Discussion with the Village about adding a fourth public garden to our caseload next year, at the Dobbs Park flagpole
- The garden club mailing list currently has 85 members.

Trails: Terry McGarty reports the following:

The Croton Trails Crew met seven times in 2023. All activities were held on the trails at various locations. Average participation is roughly five people per event.

The dates of the trails' maintenance were Dec Oct 13, Sep 9, Aug 12, Jul 8, Jun 10, May 13, Apr 8. We attempt to meet on the second Saturday of every month at 9am.

Croton Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC)
Yearly Report 2023

The locations maintained include the upper village trails system (Upper North Highland), the trail that connects the arboretum to Brinton Brook, the connector from Batten Rd, the trail from the parking area at end of Arrowcrest.

Trail work includes removing impediments such as tree limbs, sawing blowdown (fallen trees), pruning shrubs and trees, removal of invasive plants, weed whacking, trail tread repair (such as sidehill restoration, berms, etc.), installing stepping stones or walking logs (corduroys) in muddy areas, garbage collection, and more.

The trails crew also partners with our friends at the Saw Mill Audubon Society at Brinton Brook and Graff Sanctuary, the Arboretum, and The Bicycle Pedestrian Committee.

C.L.E.A.N: John Ealer reports the following:

C.L.E.A.N had 14 clean-ups and collected 53 bags of trash. The sites included Albany Post Road North, Albany Post Road North / Gouveia Park twice, Half Moon Bay Drive, Croton Harmon Train Station Lot "I" twice, Gouveia Park, Albany Post Road x Old Post Road, Duck Pond Park twice, Senasqua Park, Albany Post Road x Skyview ** (Refrigerator removed by property owner after code enforcement got involved), and Fireman's Island. On December 16 the final clean-up of the year will take place at Dobbs Park. It was approximately 1,220 pounds of trash. There was 40 people in total attending the events.

Throughout the year discussions were held on:

Gouveia Park-Request for Interest (RFI) – The village has sent out a RFI for Gouveia Park. This led to a discussion regarding CCA's past recommendation for the property. Janet will research past minutes to see exactly when CCAC visited the property. She will try and locate the minutes that contain the recommendations. Rachel and Janet do remember that we said an Audubon, sculpture garden, pollinator gardens. CCAC only made recommendations for the grounds, not the house. There was only one response to the RFI. The village has created an exploratory committee to research and make recommendations pertaining to improvements to the house and land. The first agenda item will be a new driveway.

Pokeweed: Terry received an email from a resident on Ridge Road who is concerned with pokeweed and how poisonous they are to dogs. She would like CCAC to educate the public on pokeweed. Pokeweed is native to the area and, so far, dogs stay away from it. Eva and Terry discussed that there are other poisonous plants in the area. It was decided that CCAC will have a column in the newsletter regarding poisonous plants in the area at a later date.

Billion Oyster Project: Conditions must be right in order to put the cages in the Hudson River. Croton might be too far north for this to happen. Croton is probably too far north for this project.

Hudson National Golf Club Improvements: Golf course will close down for major improvements on the greens and sand traps. The irrigation system will be updated. All construction vehicles will enter through Arrowcrest Drive. There will be site visits and about 18 conditions must be met by Hudson National.

Unique Area Croton River: Ron Sanchez, a Truesdale Drive resident, had visited in December 2022 and reported on a DEC meeting recently attended regarding the Unique Area. They are proposing a plan for a new path leading to the Croton River. Both proposals will be visible from Truesdale Dr. The path will require removal of shrubbery and will cut into the gorge. One of the proposals includes a direct access

Croton Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC)
Yearly Report 2023

stairway. Also, the plan only allows for 2-3 parking spots. DEC's plan does not include lifeguards, security guards, or sanitation for the area. The area is New York State property. Once adopted, the plan will go out to bid for contractors. There will be very limited parking and will only be monitored on weekends. The plans do not include restrooms. According to the NYSDEC website, The Unique Area is still closed to the public.

Westchester Alliance for Sustainable Solutions (WASS) Zero Waste Task Force – This group is working to close the Wheelabrator in Peekskill that is spewing toxins into the air. They hope to educate the public. The plant is 38 years old, but was built to last about 25 years. The county recently renewed its contract for an additional ten years. WASS goal is zero waste and is asking municipalities to sign a petition to tell the county to close the facility. Rachel emailed all the slides from the groups most recent Zoom meeting to review. Janet has been attending their meetings over Zoom.

Looking Ahead to 2024:

Tree Ordinance, Dark Skies, Invasives (along the trails and Croton Landing), Earth Day (April), Repair Café (June and December), Gouveia Park, NRI (pending grant approval), Green Living Series, Sub-committees (C.L.E.A.N., Garden Club/Pollinator Pathways, Trails)