

# CCAC 2025 Year-End Report

**Chair:** John Ealer

**Submitted to:** Manager Healy, Mayor Pugh, Board of Trustees

## Overview

- The CCAC remained highly active in 2025, advancing initiatives in conservation, sustainability, and stewardship.
- Activities included volunteer work, public education, policy advisory, and collaboration with Village departments and neighboring municipalities.
- The Council thanks all members, liaisons, volunteers, and partners for their collaboration and cooperation.
- The Chair expresses deep appreciation to all the committee members for their hard work throughout a productive and meaningful 2025.

## Meetings

- Eleven meetings held in 2025:
  - Jan 16
  - Feb 11
  - Mar 11
  - Apr 16
  - May 13
  - Jun 10
  - Jul 8
  - Sep 9
  - Oct 14
  - Nov 12
  - Dec 9

## Membership

- Year-End Members:
  - John Ealer (Chair)
  - Rachel Bernstein
  - Eva Thaddeus
  - Halle Clarke
  - Sherry Horowitz

- David Daly
- Jason Mencher
- Madalyn Bozinski
- New Member: Madalyn Bozinski joined in July 2025, contributing expertise to the Natural Resource Inventory.
- Leadership transition planning began after John Ealer announced, in September, his intention to step down at end of 2025.
- Transitional leadership planning still underway.

## **Liaisons**

- Brian Pugh (Mayor & Village Liaison)
- Steven Krisky (Planning Board Liaison)
- Nora Moriarty Nicholson (Trustee Liaison)

## **Key Accomplishments**

### **Earth Day 2025**

- Hosted at Senasqua Park; very successful event with several hundred in attendance and broadly positive feedback from attendees and participants.
- Included allied organizations, eco-activities, music, a clean-up and a tree giveaway.
- Post-event evaluation informed planning for Earth Day 2026.

### **Natural Resource Inventory**

- Formal launch of joint Croton–Cortlandt Natural Resource Inventory.
- Agreement with Nelson, Pope and Voorhis consulting firm.
- Advisory committee formed; focus on data usability and long-term maintenance.

### **Trail System Improvements**

- Multiple volunteer workdays for maintenance and invasive species removal.
- New trail markers and signage installed.
- Eagle Scout Surplus funds returned for future improvements.

### **Gardens & Pollinator Initiatives**

- Expansion at Gotwald Circle with pollinator-focused gardens and signage.
- Collaboration with Garden Club, DPW, and volunteers on educational and garden initiatives.
- Educational signage and outreach extended impact.

## Repair Café Relaunch

- Overcame legal and insurance barriers.
- Partnership with Croton Free Library established.
- Event scheduled for February 2026.

## Subcommittee Summaries

### Trails Committee

- Led by David Daly
- Very active during spring, summer, and early fall
- Volunteer workdays: maintenance, invasive removal, erosion control, storm cleanup (focus: Upper North Highland Loop, high-use segments)
- Advanced trail infrastructure: new signage, trail markers, DPW coordination
- Continued work on updating Village trail map (GPS traces, integration with Natural Resource Inventory) with thanks to Erin Wengrovius.
- Seasonal slowdown in late fall; planning for spring 2026

### Garden Club

- Led by Eva Thaddeus (CAC) and Karen Moy.
- From Eva:
  - 2025 was a big year for the garden club because we added our fourth and biggest public garden. Gotwald Gardens, on either side of Gotwald Circle, were designed, installed and maintained by members of the Croton Garden Club. These are intended as bee and butterfly gardens, and also waterwise gardens that will not require supplemental water. Labels mark the species to make the garden more educational for the public. We are hoping a larger explanatory sign will also be approved.

We continued the upkeep of our other three gardens: in Dobbs Park and in front of the high school and middle school. Signage was added to the middle school garden explaining what happens in the pollinator garden season by season.

Other highlights of the year included three garden visits for members at participating members' homes, a tree seedling giveaway for Earth Day, a guided tour of Lasdon Arboretum for members, and a talk co-sponsored by the Garden Club and Recreation Department on converting lawn to habitat garden.

After cleaning up our membership list this year by inviting people to opt back in (and requiring that they live in Croton) we have 46 people on our email list.

## CLEAN Subcommittee

- Organized numerous cleanup events; removed hundreds of pounds of trash from parks, roadways, waterfront.
- Collaborated with Temple Israel, youth groups and environmental partners like Riverkeeper.
- Actively developed roadside pollinator garden at intersection of Senasqua Exit and North Riverside.
- Cleanup extended into fall; seasonal pause for winter
- Began discussions on future programming (playground-focused cleanups, continuity planning).

## Repair Café Subcommittee

- Led by Sherry Horowitz
- Focused on resolving organizational challenges in 2025
- Established framework for hosting future events through coordination with regional partners and local institutions
- Scheduled February 2026 Repair Café as culmination of efforts

## Green Living and Public Education

- Consistent public education: Earth Day programming, garden talks, exploring Green Living Series renewal
- Developed written content for Village newsletters and online outreach
- Halle Clarke rebooted Conservation Corner in village monthly newsletter

## Policy, Advisory, and Inter-Municipal Work

- Continued advisory role on environmental policy and enforcement, with significant contributions from the entire committee, including Rachel Bernstein and Jason Mencher.
  - Advised on tree law updates with Village.
  - Continued advocacy for improved gas-powered leaf blower regulations and enforcement
  - Idling law education and enforcement
  - Continued groundwork on Dark Skies considerations
  - Invasive species concerns
  - Watershed education
- Advanced inter-municipal collaboration through joint Natural Resource Inventory and shared policy research with neighboring communities

## Looking Ahead (2026 Priorities)

- Complete Natural Resource Inventory
- Successful Repair Café relaunch
- Continued stewardship of trails and public gardens
- Implement more focused and sustainable Earth Day format
- Leadership transition planning and recruitment of new members to sustain Council's work and institutional knowledge
- Follow up on ongoing discussions with village on enforcement of existing laws.
- How can the committee and the village work together to catalyze progress in the committee's priorities, emphasizing meaningful improvement?