



Southern Madison Heritage Trust

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Serving the six towns of Brookfield, Eaton,
Georgetown, Hamilton Lebanon, and Madison

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December 12, 2017

Greetings from
the Board of
Southern Madison
Heritage Trust



Good news continues in every area of our work -- that is our message to you this year. We want to report on the progress of the new property received by a donation from Susan Schapiro and Sally Vernon Schapiro and on our growing partnerships locally and beyond.

In January, we closed on a donation to SMHT of 39 acres of open space just 1 mile south from the center of the Village of Hamilton on Randallsville Road. This property, named the Schapiro Reserve, has great potential for public trails and access to special historic features, namely: the West Branch Feeder of the Chenango Canal and the abandoned bed of the Ontario and Western Railroad. Although we have received grants from two sources, we will need additional funding to develop the trail and cover additional liability insurance. A parking area and rough trail – please be careful if you visit – have been built. Every property that SMHT protects requires both legal and public liability insurance. We hope you can be generous in this year-end appeal.

Updates:

Leland Reserve: SMHT continued to expand the 5th grade environmental field trip program with visits this fall by both Hamilton and Madison Central Schools.



Because we have a **strong educational component** in our mission, we offer an outdoor field trip program to the 5th graders at these schools. This program includes lessons on ecology which vary with the season. The programs are taught by Greg Owens, Forester with DEC and John Novak, retired Colgate Professor of Biology. Exploring the stream at the Leland Reserve is the highlight of the fall and spring trips. This program is in its tenth year and the teachers at both schools are enthusiastic about continuing the program.

We work closely with our neighbor to the south, the Chenango Land Trust and we are recognized as an active and pioneering all-volunteer land trust by the New York Office of the Land Trust Alliance.

SMHT has been successful in getting grants in the past from the Mid-York Foundation and the New York Office of the national Land Trust Alliance to provide improvements for public access to SMHT's properties. Some grants, especially those from the land Trust Alliance, require matching funds, typically 25%. For this reason also, we need to continue fund raising to support and further develop our activities.

Grant funds we have received are dedicated to property stewardship and improvements and may not be applied to operations. We require assistance from generous donors to cover our operating costs, such as liability insurance for properties open to the public, our 5th grade program with the Hamilton and Madison Central Schools, outreach to the community, printing and similar office costs. As an all-volunteer organization, 100% of donations are used to run the organization. We cover costs of travel and attendance at regional Land Trust Alliance meetings at our personal expense.

Plans for 2018: Our goals for the year include: 1. Providing access to the 25.6 acre Brackett Reserve by working with the Canal Corporation to cross the Madison Feeder with a bridge or boardwalk. This will open the opportunity to provide a fourth public trail and a different set of habitats for the 5th grade ecology field trips. 2. Extending the trail along the Madison Feeder from the Gateway Reserve to connect with the Hamilton Municipal Airport trails and hence to the Village of Hamilton. 3. Continuing to develop the necessary steps as we work towards national accreditation, a three year process.

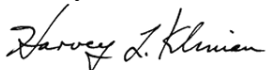
SMHT board members partner with a variety of non-profits and landowners in New York, in the course of our work to preserve open space and natural resources. We work regularly with the Chenango Canal Association, the Chenango Land Trust, the national Land Trust Alliance (LTA) through the New York State Office of the LTA, The Nature Conservancy, and New York State Parks and Trails. Currently, SMHT is working with the Partnership for Community Development in a project to improve the quality and accessibility of trails in and near Hamilton Village.

This fall, Colgate Prof. Mike Loranty and his students have used a drone to photograph the Schapiro Reserve to supplement the baseline description of the property. We plan to apply for an Upstate Institute Summer Fellow who can provide similar overflights of all SMHT properties and lands protected by conservation easements. Video overflights can greatly assist with the annual monitoring to ensure compliance with SMHT's protection responsibilities and are also required for accreditation.

No newsletter is complete without a request for support. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to SMHT. Your donation will help enable SMHT to continue its valuable work of conserving open space in our six-town area and continuing our popular education program with Hamilton and Madison 5th grades. A card and envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

Check out www.SMHT.org for more information about us, protected properties and our activities.

Thank you,



Harvey L. Kliman, President