



Southern Madison Heritage Trust

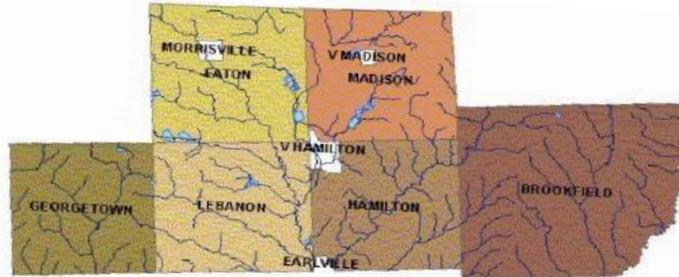
P.O. Box 117
Hamilton, NY 13346

www.smht.org smht@smht.org

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

December 8, 2020

Greetings from
the Board of
Southern Madison
Heritage Trust



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Deede van der Mandele
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Greg Owens
VP for Land Conservation
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Bill Todd (*Emeritus*)

Good news continues this year -- that is our message to you despite the pandemic. Our trails have experienced heavier use than in the past because of the pandemic, Many people have enjoyed being outdoors and socializing (socially distanced, of course). Board members and volunteers have managed to maintain our nearly 3.5 miles of trails around Hamilton, including the properties owned by SMHT: Leland Reserve on Preston Hill Road, Shapiro Reserve on Randallsville Road, and Gateway Reserve on Johnny Cake Hill Road. These are open to the public from dawn to dusk. We also added a new ~ ½ mile trail along the bed of the O&W RR bed at the Schapiro Reserve.

One bright spot is that the pandemic has encouraged more people to use our trails. Despite heavier use we are pleased that trail users have not left any litter on them. Thank you! However, more maintenance is required; in particular, to keep the trails open at the Schapiro Reserve, we will need to replace/repair the wooden deck of the bridge crossing the feeder canal. This will be a significant expense.

SMHT is working with two local farms, in developing succession plans for the younger generations to continue farming. SMHT worked with the PCD to develop the state “Farmland Protection Implementation, Dairy Transition Farmland Protection – Phase 2 Program” grant applications. If successful, the grants will purchase the development rights, infusing significant funds to enable the older generation to retire and the new generation to reduce debt and make significant improvements in these farms. SMHT would hold conservation easements on over 1000 acres to protect the farms from non-agricultural development. This is an exciting project and has the potential of supporting successful farms for succeeding generations. The NYS program is restricted to dairy farms, critical for our region.

Volunteer Support: In normal years, SMHT is fortunate to have the labor of student groups from Colgate and Morrisville State. However, this year the Colgate COVE students trimmed brush only once at Schapiro Reserve in September. Morrisville students and Colgate students were not able to participate last spring. Nonetheless, trails at Leland and Schapiro are open and user friendly.

Leland Reserve: SMHT continues to provide the Hamilton Central School 5th grade environmental field trip program with visits in the winter (on snowshoes we provide), spring, and fall. Field trips are on



hold until it is safe to resume them. The students plant trees provided by SMHT and over the last twelve years have developed an area we call the 5th Grade Forest. We have a marker sign to install designating the area. Well over 100 trees have been planted to date, including pine, spruce, maple, black walnut, and redbud.

Photo: 5th graders in SMHT logo t-shirts as reward for participating in the field school.

These **strong educational** programs, now in the 12th year, are taught by board members Greg Owens, Forester with DEC, and John Novak, retired Colgate Professor of Biology. We hope to resume this program next spring if possible or alternatively in the fall.

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.

Our continuing goals 2021 include:

1. Providing access to the 25.6 acre Brackett Woods and Scott Waterfall 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 public & 5th grade ecology field trips.
2. In partnership with the Chenango Canal Assn. 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 annual property monitoring required by our easements
4. Semi-annual trash pickup on 2 miles of 12B north of Hamilton. The picture to the right is a typical haul.



Grant funds that we receive are dedicated to property stewardship and site improvements and may not be applied to operations. We require assistance from generous donors like you 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.

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, our protected properties and activities.

Thank you,  President