



Town of Wallkill

99 Tower Drive • Middletown, New York 10941-2026

Commission for Conservation of the Environment

Kate Fox · Patricia Owen · Kevin Sumner

ANNUAL REPORT

The Commission for Conservation of the Environment (CCE) is required to submit an annual report to the Town Board no later than April 1st of each year. This report covers the period of April 1st 2007 to April 1st 2008.

During this reporting period the CCE lost two of its most active members – Sal LaBruna and Mike Leary. Mike was the group's recording secretary and undertook considerable research on ongoing CCE topics between meetings. Sal chaired the Committee and spent an enormous amount of time preparing for CCE meetings, writing reports and other documents, and attending meetings of other Town boards and committees. Since two other former members had previously resigned or stopped attending meetings, the CCE was left with only three active members – Kate Fox, Patricia Owen and Kevin Sumner. It has been difficult for the CCE to function effectively since not enough voting members were available for a quorum and workload could not be distributed among a full 7-member committee. We are looking forward to being more active and effective as we add members and return to our full membership.

Despite these challenges, the CCE was involved with numerous initiatives over the last year.

1. Natural Resources Inventory – The joint NRI project, which is funded by a NYSDEC grant received by the Town of Montgomery, is still in progress. Efforts were slowed considerably by the change in Town Supervisors in Montgomery. This brought about a change in the Project Manager in Montgomery. Currently, we are unsure of the remaining balance on the NRI grant, and have not been successful in getting a reimbursable agreement in place between Wallkill and Montgomery to allow a transfer of funds from Montgomery (the contract holder with NYSDEC) and Wallkill. The consultant who is working on the project, with support from the County Planning Department, expects the document to be completed in the next three months. This expected document is the first step in building a more complete inventory that can be made useful for town residents, town government, and local businesses and developers.
2. Wetlands and Watercourse Protection – The CCE has been promoting a locally managed wetland and watercourse protection program for several years. The CCE is aware of potential landowner concerns with the proposal. Recently, the Town's Planning firm, Behan Planning Associates, began working on this issue. The CCE met with a representative from Behan Planning in the early stages of this initiative, but has not been updated on the progress since then.

3. Big Tree Contest – In cooperation with the Soil and Water Conservation District, the CCE developed a Big Tree Contest to promote appreciation and conservation of trees and their environmental benefits. We hope to plan and put on a more ambitious outreach effort to promote the contest this spring.
4. Site Plan Reviews – This activity is one that has been given less attention than in the past due to our membership challenges. We still try to review and offer comment on larger and more sensitive sites. One goal we have is to develop a number of ‘generic’ practice descriptions to offer to the Planning Board that address common issues the CCE finds with site plan proposals. For example, on the numerous commercial development proposals seen in Walkill, we believe that several practices such as treating stormwater in parking lot islands could easily be added to Site Plans without excessive cost to the developer. These practices would help protect water quality and in general reduce environmental impacts. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this idea with the Town Board, Planning Board and PB Engineer.
5. The CCE has taken the lead in Walkill in developing an application process for farmland protection projects, and has worked closely with Michele from the Highway Department in completing funding applications. The Smiley farm was approved for funding several years ago from both the State of NY and the County of Orange. Unfortunately, the Town’s more recent application to NYS for the Smith and Vellenga farms was not successful. The CCE is anxious to discuss with the Town Board how to make this application better for future grant opportunities.
6. The CCE organized a global warming educational presentation last summer at the Community Center, presented by Shawn Dell-Joyce. Fifteen Town residents attended the presentation. Two residents attended a CCE meeting in the weeks following the presentation.

In February, two of our members met with the Town Supervisor on several matters. In particular, we were pleased to hear that the Town may be able to provide the CCE with a computer for use at our meetings, and possibly to upgrade the computer, if necessary, to make it suitable to run computer mapping software. This would facilitate our record keeping functions and help us in planning and evaluating various projects. We would like to formally ask the Town Board to follow up on making a computer available.

We are hopeful that, once our membership is restored, CCE activities will increase accordingly.