

Report of
The Conservation and Advocacy Committee
of
The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference



Committee Members

Jakob Franke

Andy Garrison

Gaylord Holmes

Dick Katsive

Seth McKee, Chair

TC Staff:

Jeremy Apgar

Ed Goodell

Larry Wheelock

**We could have saved the Earth but we were too
damned cheap.**

~Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund (LASF)

- Initiated in 2003
- Capitalized with \$1.04 million.
- Rationale:
 - Avoid missed opportunities to safeguard trail lands due to partners having other priorities.
 - Be a “game changer” - influence the priorities of NY State, other partners

LASF Focus

•n NJ --

- LASF identified 5,000 acres and 230 parcels of land that were important to the viability of 250 miles of trail, 5 long distance trails and a dozen shorter trails.
- Focus was on safeguarding and enhancing:
 - Highlands Trail - NY and NJ
 - Long Path - NY
 - Shawangunk Ridge Trail - NY



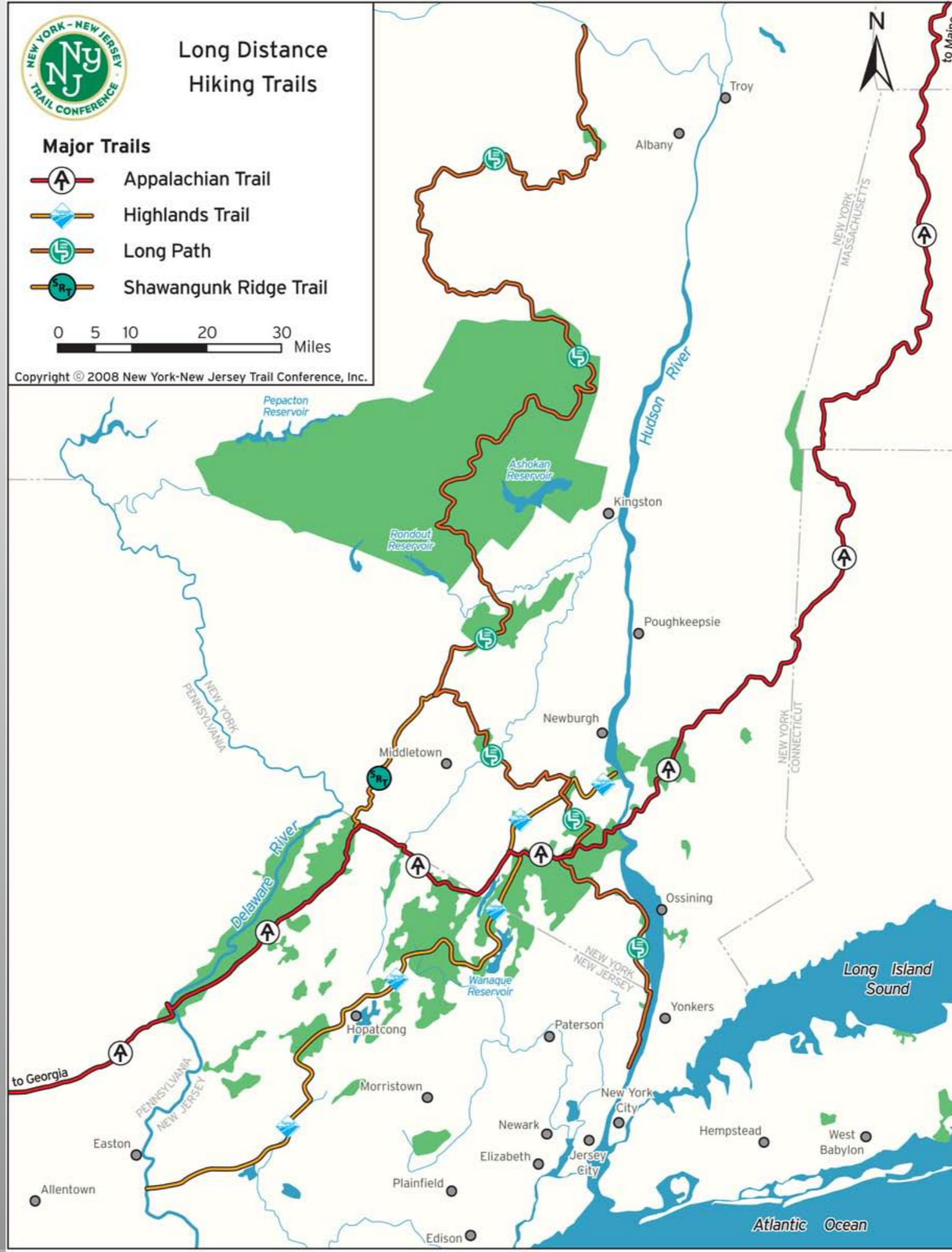
Long Distance Hiking Trails

Major Trails

-  Appalachian Trail
-  Highlands Trail
-  Long Path
-  Shawangunk Ridge Trail



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Goals of Direct Conservation for the Trail Conference

- Safeguard actual hiking trail links
- Create opportunities for new links in long-distance hiking trails
- Create opportunities for new side trails to long-distance hiking trails
- Protect key views from hiking trails

Excerpts from the TC's LASF Promotional Brochure

- THE DREAM includes the creation of permanently protected trail corridors linking major public open spaces throughout the region. The development and protection of these corridors will establish a network of conservation lands that will:
 - Enhance the enjoyment of hiking and other outdoor recreational activities
 - Act to curb suburban sprawl and helping check major residential and commercial development of what is now privately held open space.
 - Further protect watersheds that provide drinking water to the region.
 - Create vital links for wildlife populations and provide migration and dispersal routes for plants and animals.

- We are financing the creation of permanently protected trail corridors through the Land Acquisition & Stewardship Fund, a revolving fund capitalized with at least \$2,000,000 that is being raised by our Capital Campaign. Over the next five to ten years, we expect to expedite the addition of more than 5,000 acres, and guarantee the protection of more than 200 miles of new or existing hiking trails in New York and New Jersey. When the trail corridors are fully assembled, the Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund will become an endowment that will sustain our stewardship mission, providing resources to protect and maintain the best system of hiking trails in the country.

LASF Accomplishments

- 2,087 acres conserved
- 1,410 acres sold
- 677 acres still owned
- 2,258 additional acres were conserved with Trail Conference assistance
- Highlands Trail (NJ): 170 acres conserved, 2 parcels (one trail parcel, one viewshed parcel)
- Long Path: 296 acres conserved, 2 parcels
- Shawangunk Ridge Trail: 1,621 acres conserved, 43 parcels

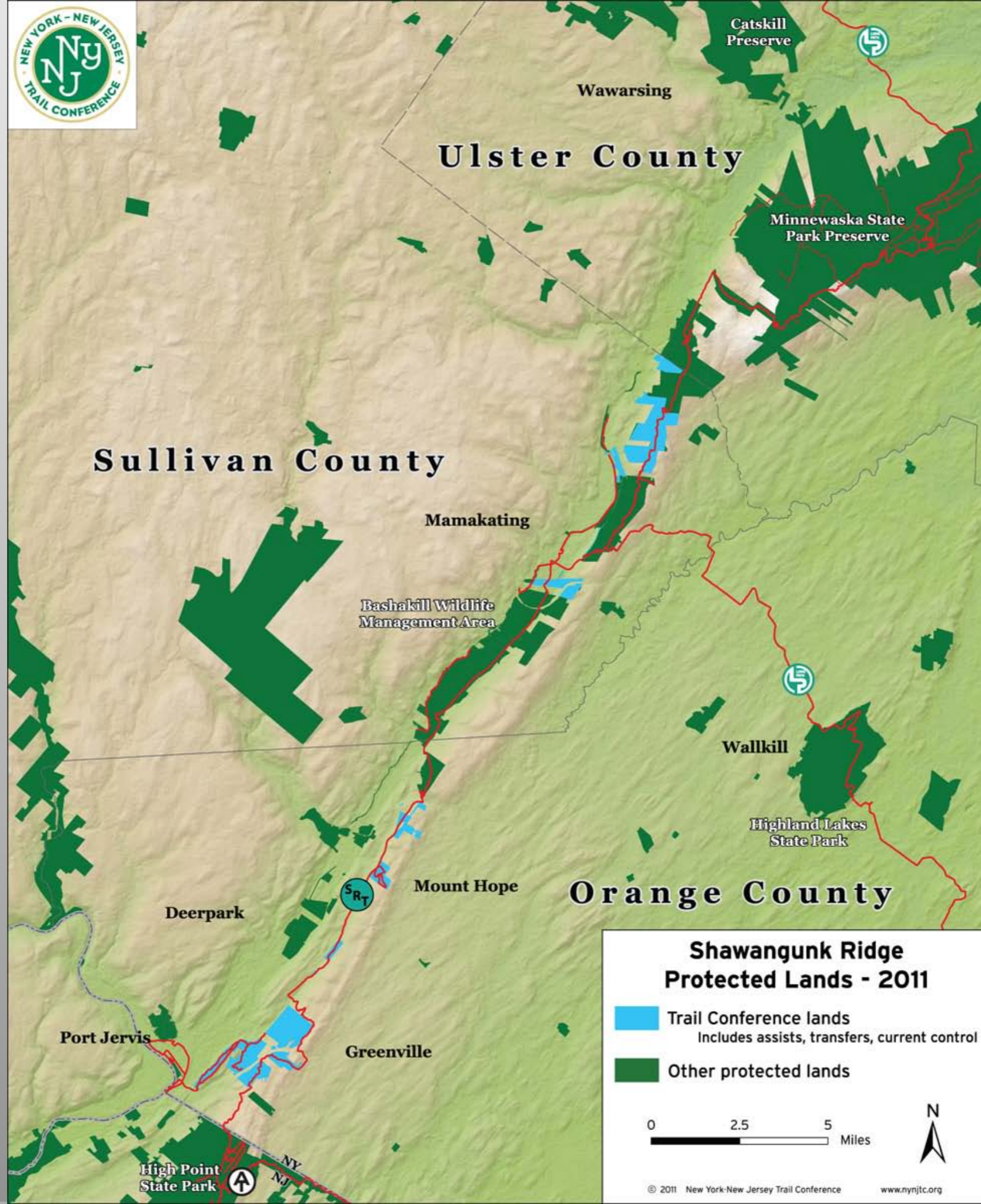
Highlands Trail



Long Path

Good Tidings Property



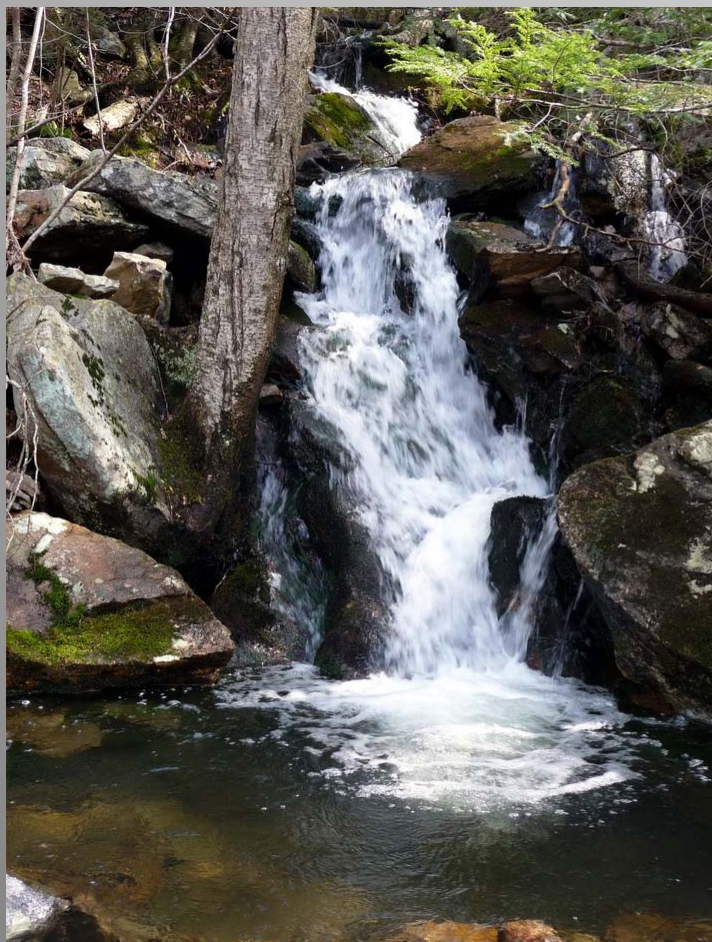


Shawangunk Ridge Protected Lands - 2011

- Trail Conference lands
Includes assists, transfers, current control
- Other protected lands

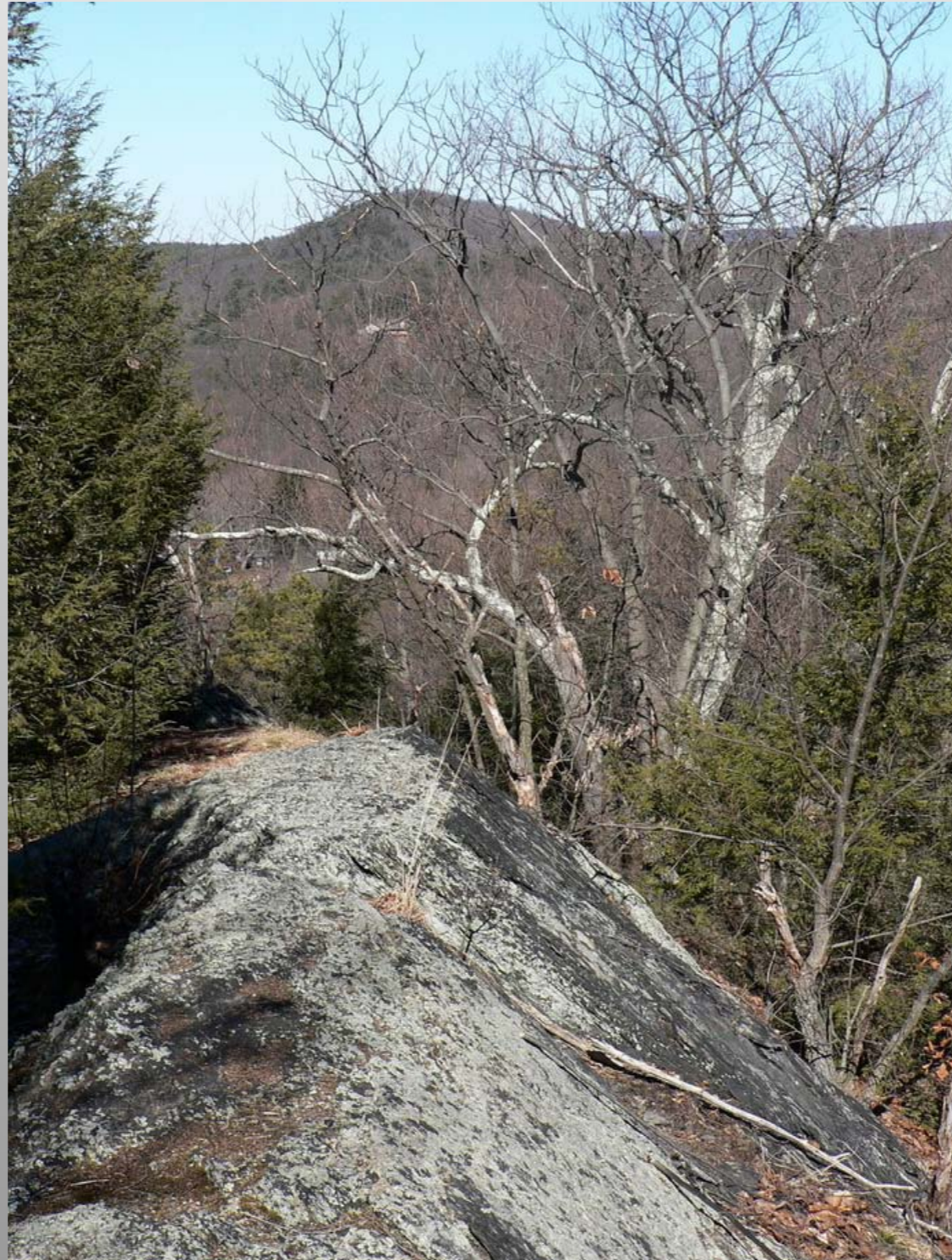


Shawangunk Ridge Trail - Holley Property



Shawangunk Ridge Trail

Lenape Ridge Trail



Shawangunk Ridge Trail

Minisink Trail



Shawangunk Ridge Trail - Mt. Hope



LASF by the Numbers

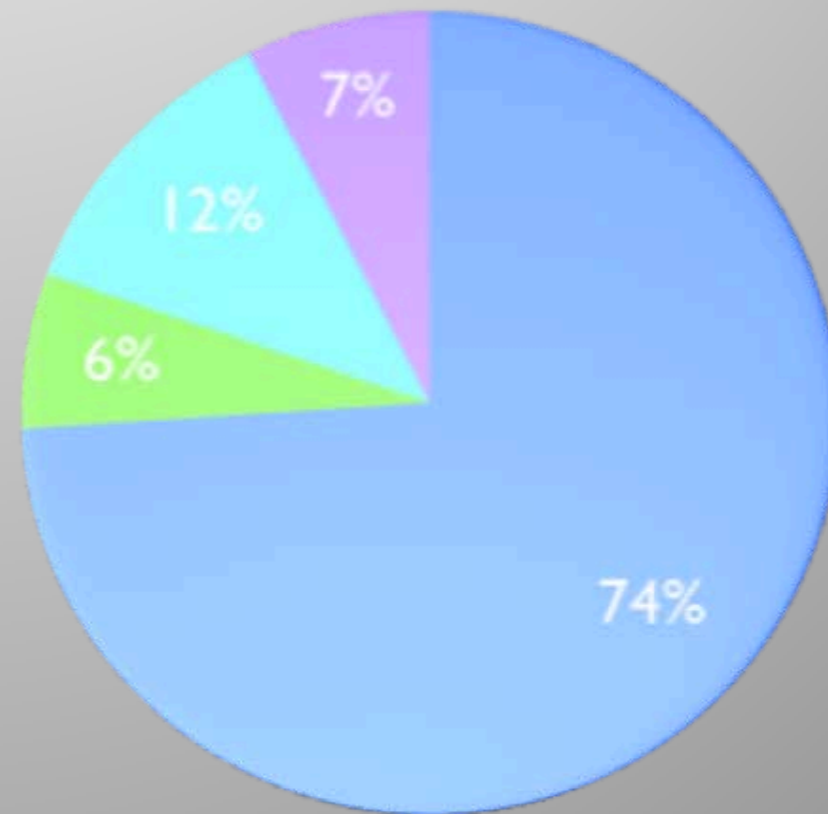
- Capital campaign raised \$836,000 in donations for LASF
- Board allocated \$200,000 via a bequest
- Since 2003, the TC has spent \$3.16 million to conserve 2,087 acres (average cost: \$1,514/acre)

LASF by the Numbers

- \$4,259,000 spent
 - \$3.16 million directly for land purchases
 - \$307,000 on closing costs, taxes
 - \$483,000 on staff and other expenses
 - \$309,000 on interest payments on loans

LASF Accomplishments

- Total LASF Costs



LASF Income

- Land Sales: \$2.75 million
- Capital Campaign: \$0.84 million
- Board Bequest: \$0.20 million
- Total: \$3.79 million

LASF Cash Flow

- \$4.26 million spent (including closing costs, etc.)
- \$3.79 million raised
- -\$485,557 deficit
- Once pending SRT land sale is complete: \$1.06 million surplus

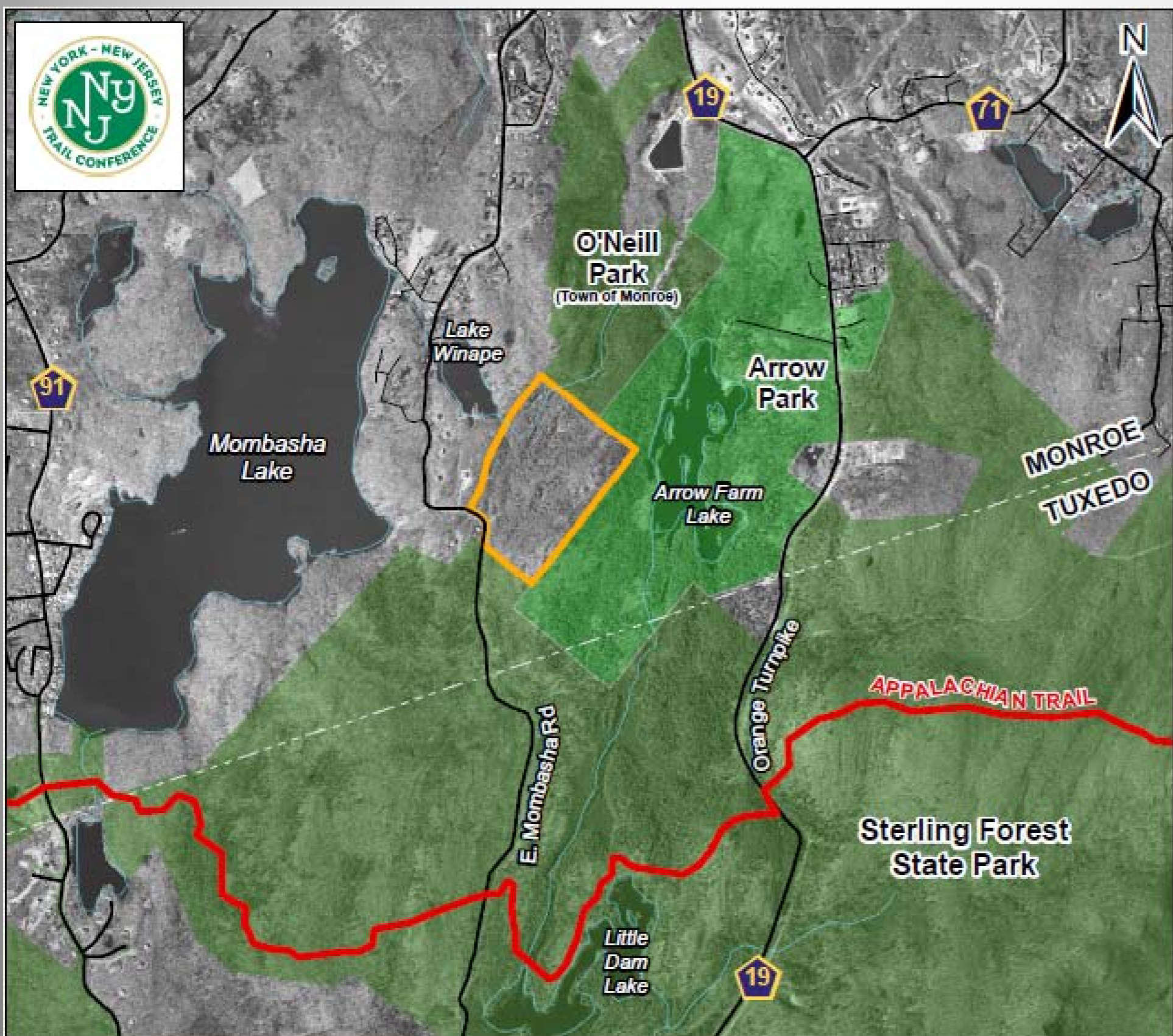
“Assists”

2,258 acres, 16 properties

- Holding an option to purchase but transferring it to another entity prior to purchase.
- Negotiating the basic terms of a purchase that another entity makes.
- Connecting a surplus parcel to a DEC parcel so the surplus parcel becomes parkland.

Assist Example: Shirazi Property

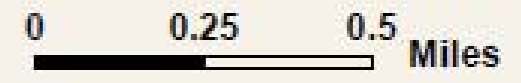
- 63 acres adjacent to Sterling Forest State Park and Appalachian Trail
- TC negotiated purchase price, secured option agreement.
 - Orange Co. Land Trust paid for appraisal
 - \$5000 option payment donated by AMC-NJNY Chapter
- Option transferred to OPRHP, who closed the deal and added to Sterling Forest State Park
- Cost to Trail Conference: \$0 (except staff time)



Shirazi Property Near Arrow Park

Monroe, NY

- Protected
- Proposed
- Shirazi Property
- Appalachian Trail



Unfinished Business

- The TC still owns 284 acres along the SRT that we paid \$311,000 for - \$1,169 per acre.
- Hope to sell one day to NYS, but this will take time as the State's ability to purchase land is limited these days.
- We should expect to realize an upside on this, given our low per-acre expense.

Unfinished Business

- While the LASF has been very successful, the need to protect important trail lands remains.
- There are still unprotected lands under our long distance trails and development pressures, while currently reduced, remain a real threat to these trails.
- Once these lands are developed they are gone forever. At this time the cyclical reduction in land prices means that it costs less to protect trail lands.
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Ridgeview Estates Property

Current uses: Trails, views, wetlands, streams, beaver ponds

Potential Uses: business park, condominiums

Description

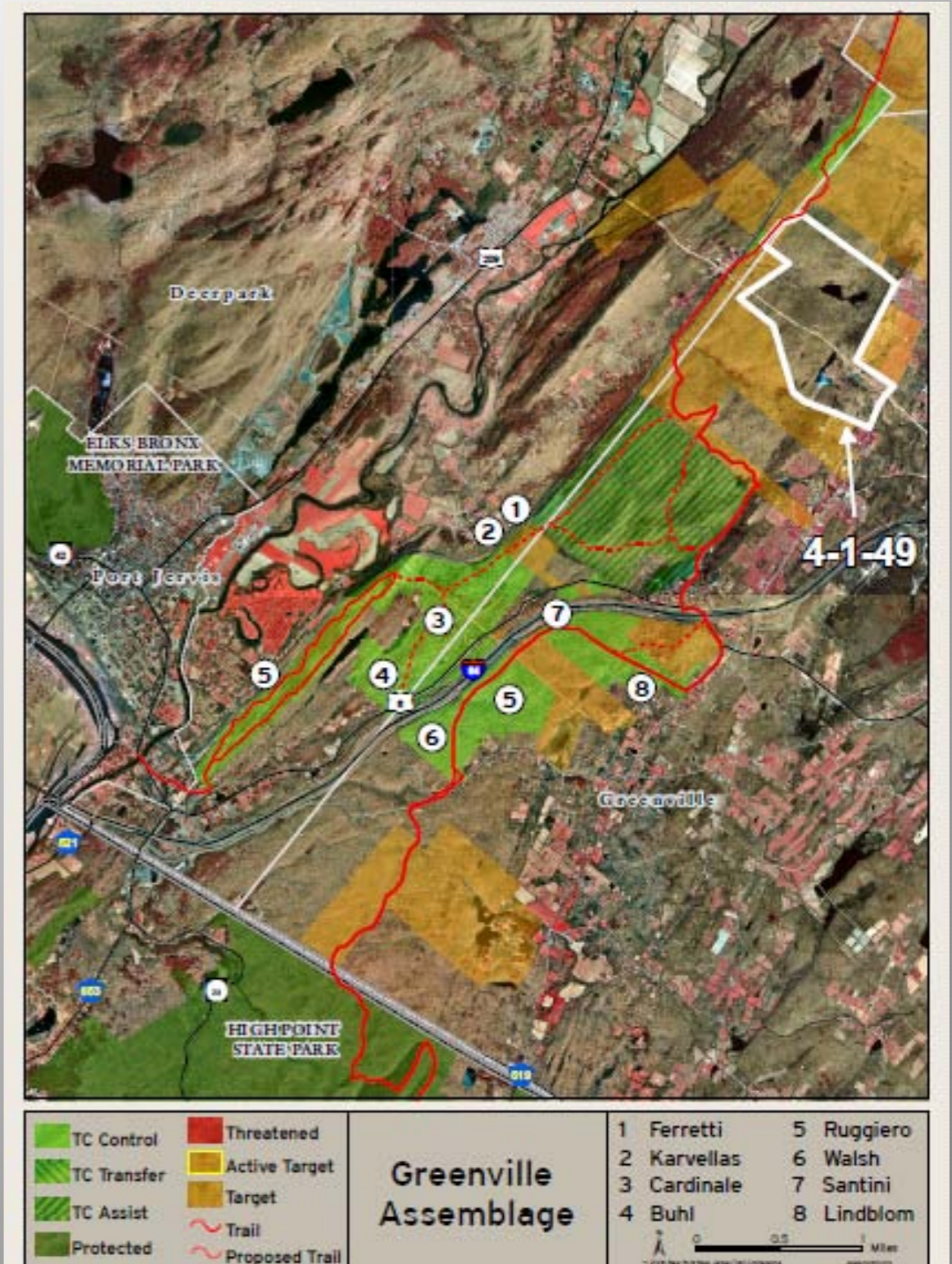
One of the largest remaining ridge-top parcels
at approximately 450 acres
Gently rolling park like setting with 3
small lakes part of Neversink
tributary headwaters
Estimated purchase price -
\$2,000,000

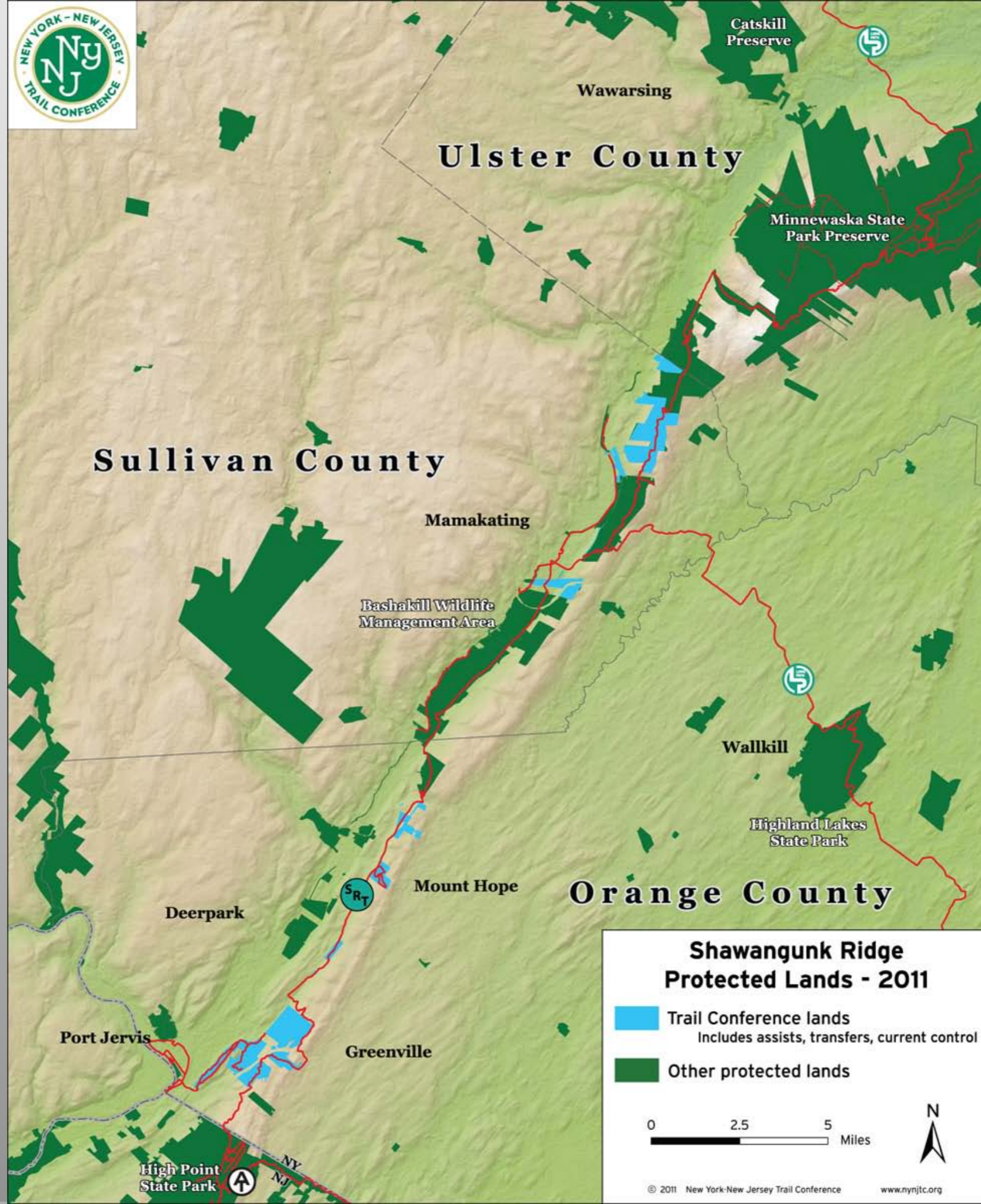
Acquisition will:

Move trail off of active railroad bed
onto secure route with ample
opportunities for side trails
Protect important wildlife corridor

Progress of assemblage:

TPL held option in early 2010 but
were unable to identify takeout
funding for DEC acquisition
Have promoted acquisition to County
but no immediate action forthcoming.





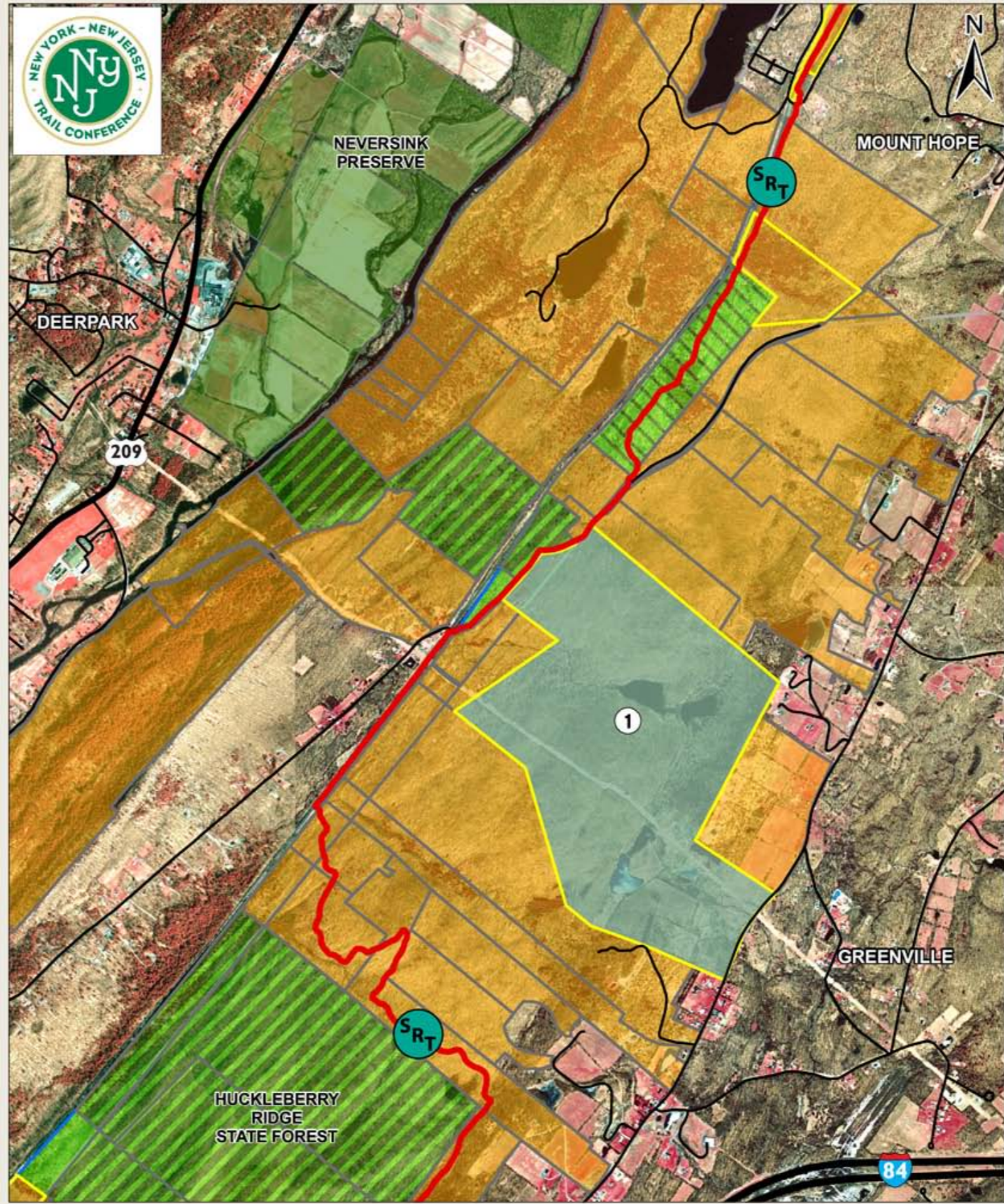
Shawangunk Ridge Protected Lands - 2011

- Trail Conference lands
Includes assists, transfers, current control
- Other protected lands

0 2.5 5 Miles

N

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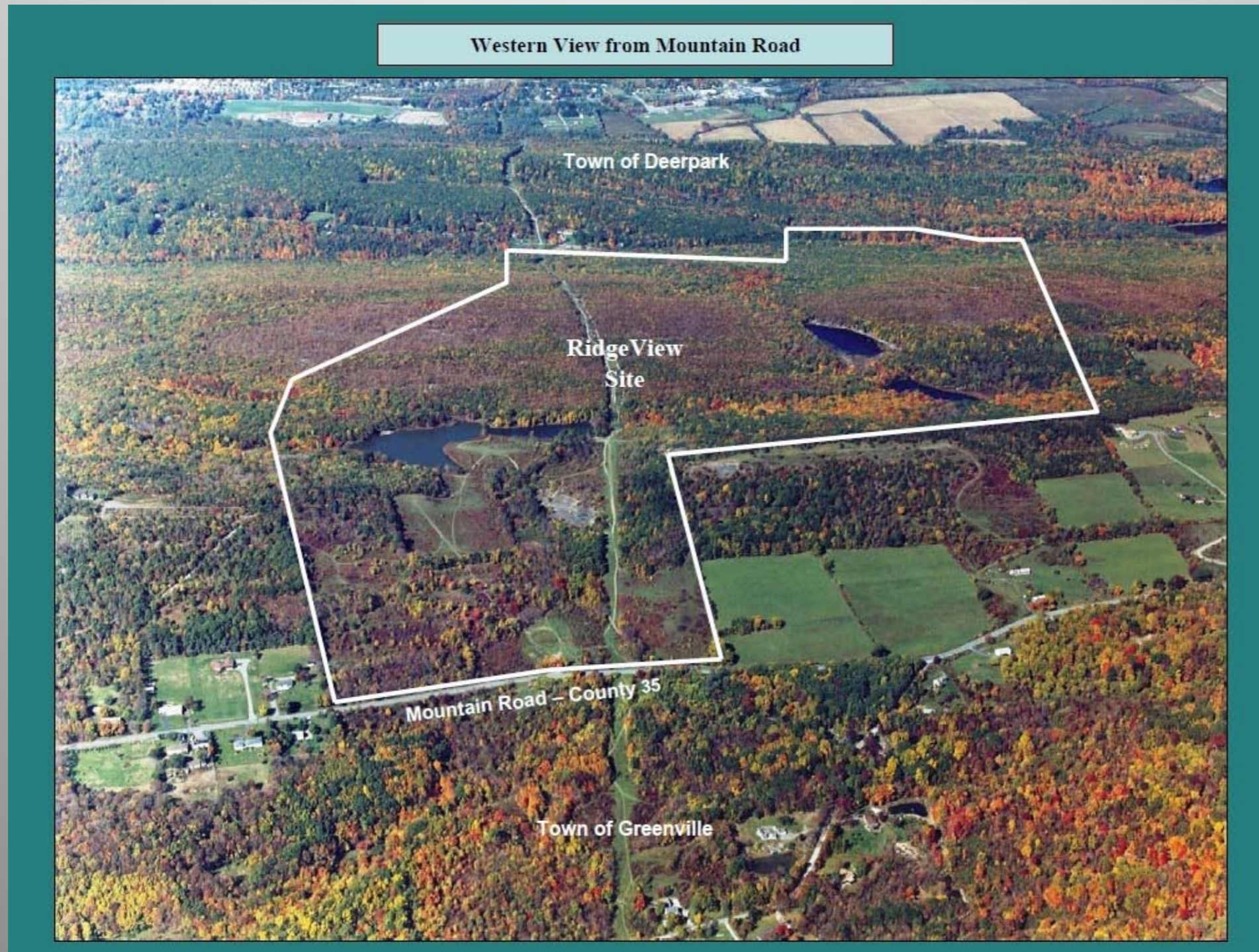
	TC Control		Threatened
	TC Transfer		Active Target
	TC Assist		Target
	Protected		Trail
			Proposed Trail

Greenville Assemblage Parcels

① Ridgeview Estates

FOR SALE:

Ridgeview Estates Property, Town of Greenville
(Shawangunk Ridge Trail)



Ridgeview Estates Property

Current uses: Trails, views, wetlands, streams, beaver ponds

Potential Uses: business park, condominiums



New York – New Jersey Trail Conference

Conservation Properties Ready to Close in Orange County, New York

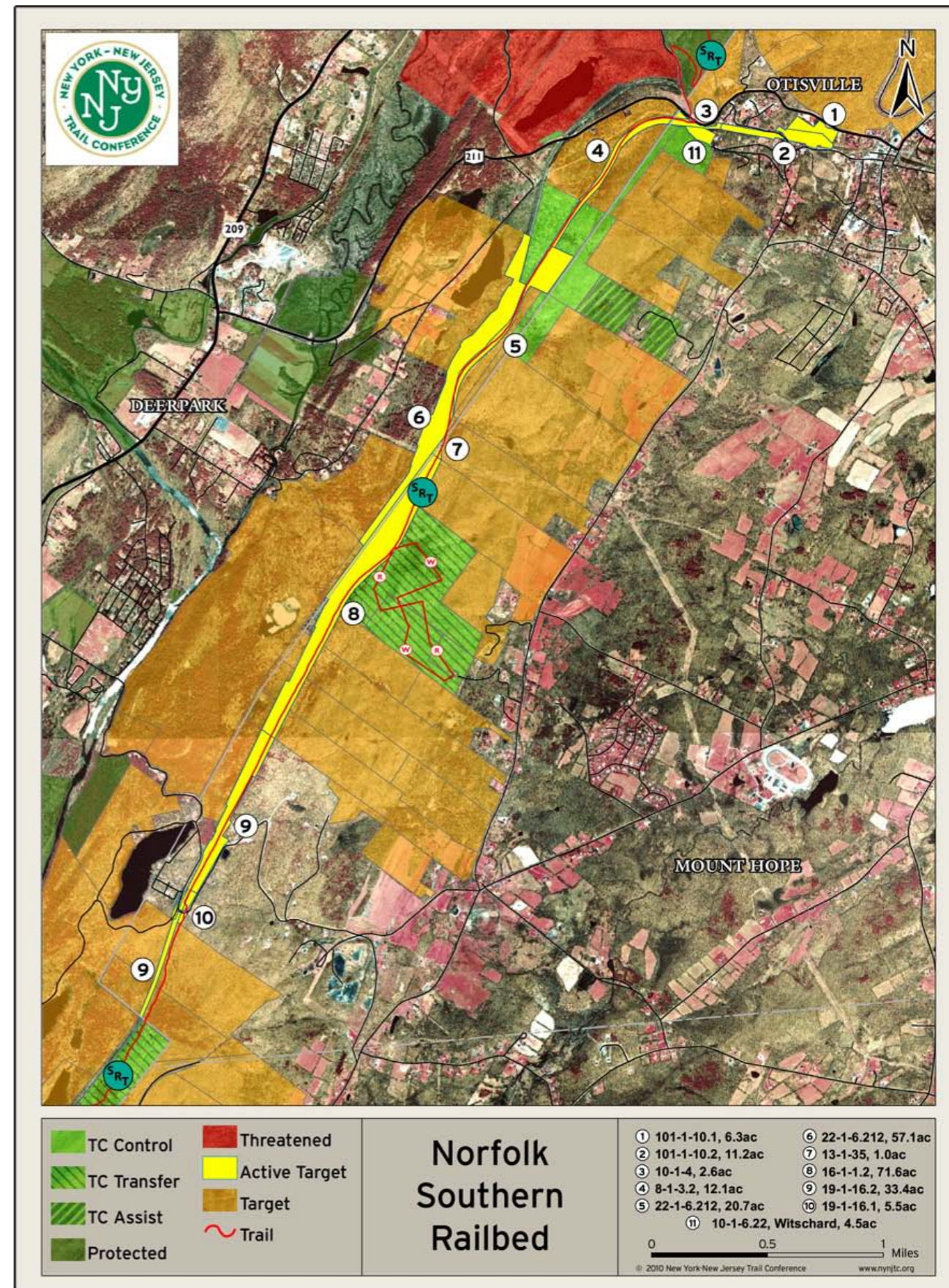
156 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, NJ 07430
201 512-9348
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Shawangunk Ridge Trail

Norfolk Southern Abandoned Railroad

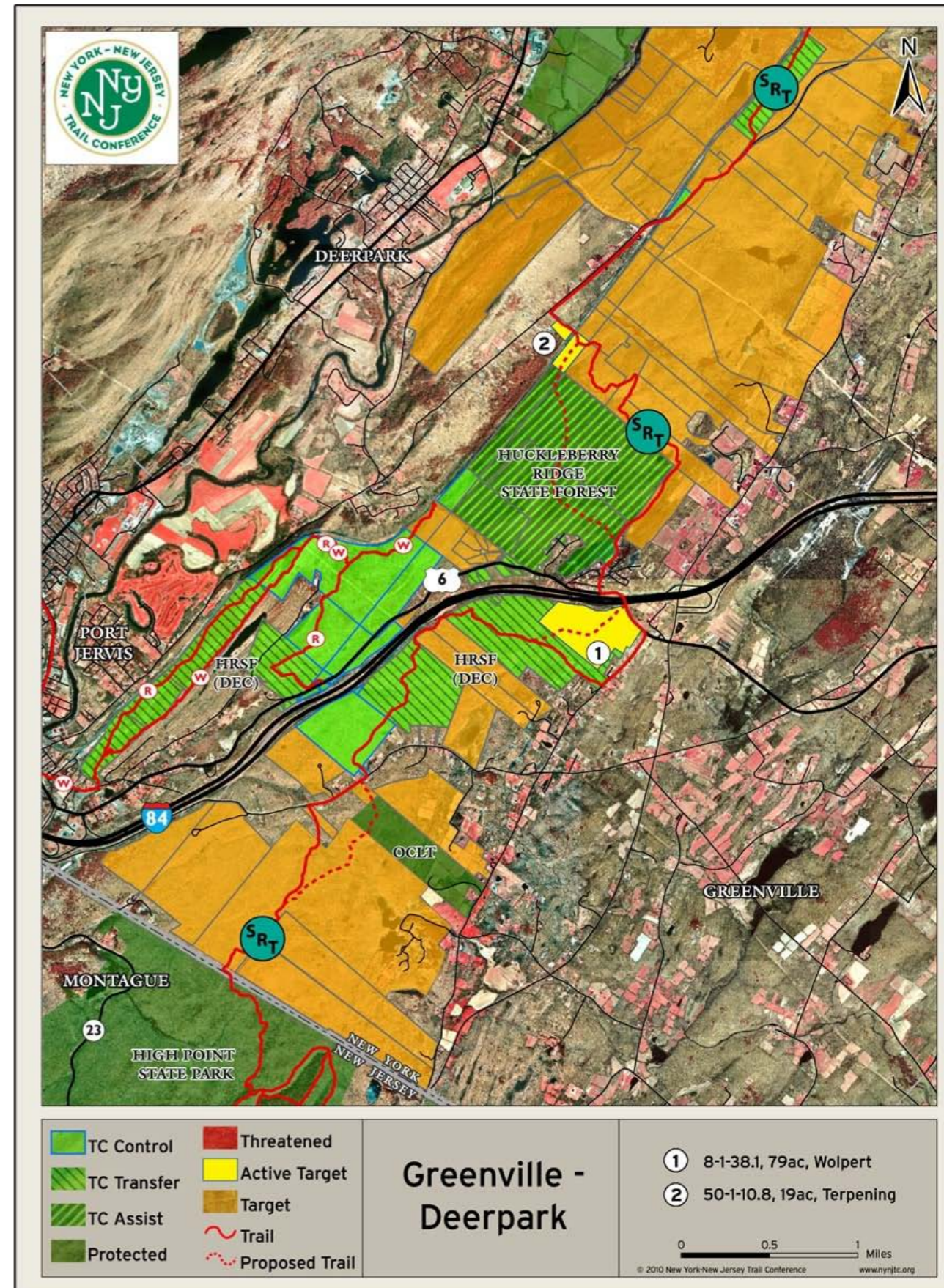
- Description
 - Acres to be purchased – 98
 - Estimated purchase price – \$390,000
- Acquisition will:
 - Critical 4.45 mile connection of ridge-top open space
 - Create a 5.2 mile long walking / bike path that leads from the center of Otisville
 - Protect important wildlife corridor
- Progress of assemblage:
 - County put hold on property in 2005.
 - Norfolk Southern is prepared to negotiate with County.
 - Trail Conference has purchased 7 parcels totaling 132 acres in the area that are expected to be purchased by NYS DEC.
 - Trail Conference Previously transferred 150 acres to the DEC for state forest land in this area.
 - Additional adjacent properties are being prioritized for preservation efforts.



Shawangunk Ridge Trail / Huckleberry Ridge State Forest

Wolpert & Terpening

- Description
 - Wolpert (8-1-38.1)
 - 79 acres on top of the Shawangunk Ridge
 - Listed purchase price - \$395,000
 - Terpening (50-1-10.8)
 - 19 acres on the Northwest corner of Huckleberry Ridge State Forest
 - Appraised price – \$45,000
- Acquisition will:
 - Eliminate a 1 mile dangerous road walk.
 - Improve and permanently protect the Shawangunk Ridge Trail by eliminating a 6/10 of a mile walk along an active RR.
 - Preserve the view shed visible from I-84.
 - Protect important wildlife corridor and a watershed and aquifer recharge area.
- Progress of assemblage:
 - Trail Conference has purchased seventeen parcels totaling 983 acres of which 569 acres has been transferred to the DEC. TC also worked with TPL to preserve and transfer to DEC 515 acres.
 - Additional adjacent properties are being prioritized for preservation efforts.



Recommendation

- Proceeds from the pending property sales should be used first to repay the borrowed funds (Golden Foundation).
- The remaining proceeds should be retained in the LASF and made available for its original purpose: to protect important trails by protecting the land under and around them.
- This is what the Trail Conference promised donors to the LASF that we would do with their contributions.

TC Conservation Policy (adopted June 2010)

- “Hold property as briefly as possible, or not at all, and never permanently”.
- We see the LASF as a "war chest" to be used judiciously, and only in instances where outright acquisition **initiated** by the Trail Conference is the only way to meet our objective of safeguarding long-distance hiking trails.

We would want to ask ourselves when considering the acquisition of property:

- Is there a less expensive means of realizing our goals, such as a trail easement or temporary landowner agreement?
- If not, is there any other entity that would be suited to acquire the property?
- If not, is the property a priority for acquisition by a government agency, thereby reducing the time that the Trail Conference would need to hold the property?

Proposed Next Steps

- The Shawangunk Ridge Trail passes through an area that is "underserved" in terms of interest by conservation organizations.
- Our Committee intends to assess the gaps and potential links in the trail which could be shored up through acquisition of land or easements by either the TC or other organizations. Several parcels have already been identified.
- If the TC turns out to be the most appropriate entity to purchase, we would engage with the appropriate state agency to see whether acquisition of such property would be a priority.
- We will do a similar scan of the Long Path and Highlands Trail.
- It will be very useful to have a modest amount of staff time in order to do this efficiently -- some combination of Jeremy Apgar and the program coordinators.

• In sum, the C&A Committee believes that maintaining the LASF:

- Will be beneficial to the mission of the Trail Conference;
- Is what the donors to the Fund intended; and
- Will firm up our ability to fill voids where other entities are unable to act.
- All in the service of safeguarding and enhancing our vitally important long-distance trails.