

KENT CAC 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

I am pleased to submit the following report on the activities of the Kent CAC. The Committee is composed of seven volunteers appointed by the Town Board to provide advice on conservation issues and to conduct such programs as described by Kent Code Article VII. The current membership is given below. Our meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of each month (no meetings are held in July, August, and December). They are open to the public and publicized in advance in the local newspaper, on the Town's web site and by email to anyone who expresses an interest. Reports of our monthly meetings are filed with the Town Clerk and are available on the Committee's page on the Town web site. We thank Supervisor Doherty for her continued support and also thank liaisons Lou Tartaro and Penny Osborn-Tarbox from the Town Board for facilitating our efforts.

The primary focus of the Committee has been to encourage the enjoyment, appreciation and preservation of the natural areas within the town of Kent. We design our programs for family groups in the hope that the next generation will come to share in the benefits and personal satisfactions that come from being in an environment barely altered by the hand of civilization.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Committee members are George Baum (Chair), Anne Balant-Campbell, Bill Buck, David Ehnebuske, Joe Greico, Beth Herr, Phil Tolmach. The Town Board liaisons are Lou Tartaro and Penny Osborn-Tarbox. We thank Jean Ehnebuske who has volunteered as recording secretary.

HIKES

Under the guidance of our Hike Coordinator, David Ehnebuske, the CAC has conducted a series of popular hikes to some of the wonderful open space areas in Kent. We feel that by introducing families of residents to these areas with unusual natural features, they will come to value, preserve, and enjoy them.

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| Jan 1 | Fred Dill Wildlife Sanctuary: While this area is in Carmel, it is an ideal hike for the day. |
| May 1 | Hawk Rock and Mead farm site: Our trail passes through a large parcel now owned by NYC DEP. This popular hike provides a reminder of the early families that settled in the region and has numerous interesting erratics. |
| Jun 5 | Wonder Lake: This parcel is owned by NYS. It features a nice mountaintop lake. The trail was established by NYNJTC. |
| July 24 | White Pond: This attractive lake is on DEC property. It was once a site of numerous local mills powered by water flowing out of the lake. |
| Oct 9 | Mt Nimham Fire Tower: We passed through the DEC Mt Nimham forest and then from the tower we experienced the fall foliage from the tallest remaining fire tower in NYS. At the base of the tower, the history of the construction, use, and restoration of the tower was reviewed. |

MT NIMHAM FIRE TOWER

- May New plywood panels inside the cab were given a base coat, a top coat of hunter green and a new graffiti-resistant surface treatment. Several months later, our efforts to wash off the graffiti were only partially successful and damaged the green top coat.
- July A safety railing around the trap door opening in the cab was installed. It was constructed from threaded steel 1¼-inch pipe.
- Sept The inside of the cab was repainted. The top rail of the safety railing had been removed by vandals.

Trash barrels at the tower and next to the DEC kiosk are emptied regularly and the trash taken to the Kent Recycling Center.

After several discussions between the Chair and DEC Forester Wiegert, the local Forester Wilson organized a meeting with the Putnam County Emergency Services regarding vandalism at the tower. The Chair was particularly incensed by the senseless destruction of the trash bins he had chained to the tower. Deputy Commissioner Adam Stiebeling led the meeting and assured the Chair of increased surveillance. He subsequently supplied the Chair with a key for the replacement lock at the DEC gate.

HORSEPOUND UNIT

The CAC's TRP (temporary revocable permit) agreement with DEP continues. Our prime activity has been an annual hike to Hawk Rock and the Mead farm site. Due to major erosion on Washington Road, we have reversed our route and visit the farm site first. Large rocks are popping out of the barn wall, however it seems that twenty-first century capabilities are not up to those of the nineteenth century builders as restoring or protecting the wall from continued deterioration appears to be beyond our resources.

WEBSITE

Our webmaster, David Ehnebuske, has worked with the Town's webmaster to maintain the CAC page on the www.townofkentny.gov web site. He also maintains a linked site, www.kentcac.info, and manages the CAC's [email subscription system](#). These sites are a means for communicating notices and details of our activities, and in particular our hikes.

COMMUNITY ACTIONS

1. The Chair and David Ehnebuske, acting at the request of the PCLT (Putnam County Land Trust) and the NYNJTC (New York New Jersey Trail Conference) ,met with representatives of the Lake Tibet Park District to present a proposal by the PCLT to create a trail into DEP property beginning on a vacant lot in the Park District. The Park District representatives in turn presented the proposal to property owners where it was rejected as too intrusive into the community.
2. A public viewing of the film *Earth: The Operators' Manual* was organized for December 5 at the Lake Carmel Community Center. The film explored the energy needs of the future and the sources by which these needs might be met. A discussion of the issues followed the viewing.

3. Member Anne Balant-Campbell arranged for the showing of the film Gasland which exposed many of the problems encountered in areas where this drilling technique has been conducted.
4. The Chair and Beth Herr attended the NYACC (New York Association of Conservation Commissions) meeting at West Point. The meeting was organized by ELLA (Hudson Hills and Highlands Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance). Fred Koontz delivered a visionary and inspiring opening presentation. Dr. Koontz has unfortunately resigned his position at Teatown Lake Reservation for another position.
5. CAC members Anne Campbell, Beth Herr, and David Ehnebuske participated in an amphibian monitoring effort sponsored by the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program and Cornell University.
6. The Chair attended a DEC public hearing on the expanded California Hill MUA. After consultation with the CAC committee, the Chair submitted a letter with comments to DEC.
7. Member David Ehnebuske promoted the two Medication Take-Back Days organized by the Putnam County Health Department.
8. Members George Baum and Beth Herr are on the Advisory Board of the Clearpool Model Forest (CMF). We look forward to participating with CMF on several of their programs.

OUTLOOK

We look forward to continuing our relationship and agreements with DEC and DEP. In the Mt Nimham area, we endeavor to maintain the fire tower in a safe and clean condition. Slowly, restoration donor name tags are disappearing from the tower steps and soon the number will be sufficient to order replacements. The safety fencing below the railings is barely adequate. We need to look into a more substantial yet affordable replacement. It would be prudent to begin to build up the tower fund so that upgrades and eventual repainting can be more readily financed. We intend to expand content of our popular web site: the KCAC Nature Almanac will be launched January 1, 2012, providing a forum for Kent residents to document natural, meteorological, and celestial events; a web page about the Civilian Conservation Corps' ~~construction of the Mt Nimham Fire Tower will be added with a request for additional information~~ to archive. A start on a local biotic inventory is also planned.

I have retired as Chair of this fine organization after serving for over 12 years. I am grateful to the many members and volunteers who have made our projects possible and enriched my life by their comradeship. My predecessors, Ray Singer, Jim Baker, and Tom Morgan, provided more than enough vision for tasks that I have endeavoured to move forward.

Sincerely,

George Baum, Chair
6 January 2012