

QUADRICENTENNIAL TASK FORCE ON LAND USE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

TASK FORCE CHAIRS:

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VISION:

As we pass the Hudson 400th and look to the decades ahead, the heart of our vision is preservation and enhancement of the very qualities and resources that make the Hudson Valley the world class region that has earned its Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area and its reputation as a place with an outstanding quality of life:

- City and town centers are vibrant hubs for living and working. They attract young people, families and seniors;
- An excellent mass-transportation system with inter-municipal links and opportunities for walking, bicycle riding, river transit, and other alternatives to auto travel;
- Areas designated for industrial and commercial use near existing infrastructure that attract and support a vibrant economy.
- A natural environment whose areas meet the highest state and federal standards for biological diversity, scenic beauty, and agricultural productivity are permanently protected from future development.
- A formalized tradition of regional planning.
- A plentiful supply of clean, tasty and safe drinking water.
- Unlimited public access to Hudson River where a full range of recreational activities can be enjoyed along a sewage- and pollution-free river where real time information on site-specific water quality is available river wide.
- Land and water free of legacy toxic pollutants such as PCBs;
- Stable, sustainable populations of all the River's native fish and aquatic species.
- Residential and commercial buildings powered, heated and cooled distributed renewable energy resources, none of which rely on River water for cooling or other purposes;

- Existing building stock is adaptively reused.
- Air quality meets state and federal health standards.
- Carbon emissions are among the lowest in the nation. Planning policies (including both land conservation and building codes) reflect state-of-the-art practices for adaptation to rising sea levels from climate change;

PROPOSITIONS: *(Click on each proposition below to read more and comment.)*

1. CREATE ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE CENTERS SURROUNDED BY PERMANENTLY PROTECTED OPEN SPACE AND WORKING FARMS

Challenge: Similarly to the rest of the nation, sprawl has dominated Hudson Valley development patterns in the post WWII era. Sprawl results in a number of negative consequences, from the increased CO2 emissions that harm our planet to the promotion of a sedentary lifestyle that creates physical and mental health issues for people.

Encourage development in city, town and village centers over sprawl.

- Develop, complete and implement county Greenway Compacts. For example, move forward with Dutchess County's Greenway Connections.
- Take advantage of existing legal powers to provide and support strong leadership and consistent funding for the Hudson River Valley Greenway so it can provide powerful incentives for efficient regional planning that directs development to urban centers and protect open space.
- Provide Department of State staff and capital resources to support municipalities in developing Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs that plan for appropriate development and conservation areas, achieve regional goals, and balance competing interests.
- Direct a portion of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative funding to smart growth planning and implementation, open space preservation to reduce sprawling development, and to implement the recommendations of the New York State Sea Level Rise Task Force.
- Pass the state Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Priorities Act to direct investment to cities and villages to provide jobs and opportunity.
- Create incentives for development around train stations and transit facilities.

- Improve sewer and water infrastructure in built areas to support downtown development.
- Provide strong incentives for infill development in built areas and conservation subdivisions on ecological and agricultural lands. An example of this may include a streamlined permitting process and state programs that invest in downtowns.
- Redevelop formerly industrial sites for uses consistent with regional goals.
- Consolidate or merge local governments and authorities and share services to reduce the “race for ratables.”

2. PROTECT AND PRESERVE UNDEVELOPED LAND RESOURCES

Challenge: Maintaining undeveloped land in the Hudson Valley will face a number of challenges in the coming years. These challenges include: the home-rule power of individual localities, Albany’s practice of diverting funds that are meant to protect the environment, and a lack of understanding about the implications of a national park designation.

Protect lands that meet New York State’s highest standards for scenic, ecological and agricultural purposes.

- New York State should increase support and partnerships with land trusts collaborating on land conservation projects to take advantage of depressed real estate prices in scenic areas of statewide significance, natural heritage program areas, biologically important areas, significant coastal habitats, and on lands with prime agricultural soils and agricultural soils of statewide importance.
- Fully and consistently fund the Environmental Protection Fund at \$500 million per year. Funds from the fund should be allowed to make debt service payments on loans to facilitate open space acquisition and develop strategies to integrate and enhance existing funding.
- Support designation of the Hudson Valley as a unit of the National Park system pursuant to Rep. Maurice Hinchey’s Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study Act.
- Adopt uniform state policy to pay taxes or PILOTs (Payments in-Lieu of Taxes) on state-owned and preserved lands.

- Pass enabling legislation that allows local adoption of the Community Preservation Act, with matching state funds through the Environmental Protection Fund.
- Integrate priority conservation lands into a State Smart Growth Plan.
- Implement transfer of development rights to direct development to infill areas and conserve surrounding open space.
- Fully and consistently fund the Hudson River Estuary Program at \$10 million per year. New staff should be assigned to coordinate with local governments, land trusts, and community groups in the Hudson Valley on issues relating to land use and natural resource protection.
- Provide direct bicycle and pedestrian trail connections between conservation lands and urban and infill areas.
- Pass the Environmental Bond Act to support and fund land conservation.

3. ENCOURAGE COLLABORATIVE LAND USE REVIEW PROCESSES THAT BALANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

Challenge: Existing environmental review processes often satisfy no one because they are set up as zero-sum propositions. This leads to frustrated citizens and can unnecessarily stall deserving projects.

Replace the adversarial review processes with collaborative and flexible approaches that ensure environmental protection *and* results in center-based and job-creating development.

- Empower the Greenway to mediate regulatory disputes between applicants, lead agencies and stakeholders to achieve economic goals and greater environmental benefits.
- Encourage the use of Generic Environmental Impact Statements (GEIS) in land use planning processes to pre-identify suitable development sites, identify potential impacts and mitigate impacts.
- Involve the public early in planning processes.
- Build flexibility into the permitting process to protect the environment while encouraging center-based development.
- Provide training and expert advice for local governments for the efficient conduct of SEQRA reviews.

4. REVITALIZE AND REDEVELOP THE HUDSON RIVER'S WATERFRONTS

Challenge: Throughout the world, cities and towns are reclaiming their waterfronts and developing attractive mixed-use development on their shores. Localities may desire waterfront development but often lack resources to develop comprehensive waterfront plans. In addition, the costs of updating our shoreline infrastructure, cleaning up polluted formerly industrial sites and clearing old railroad track connections can be cost-prohibitive.

Construct mixed-use development that retain our scenic beauty, provide park and open space and reconnect people with the river.

- Plan for waterfront development and conservation by adopting a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and following greenway principles and guidelines in Scenic Hudson's *Revitalizing Hudson Riverfronts*.
- Revise zoning codes to prioritize water-dependent uses and provide incentives for waterfront esplanades and trails.
- Provide docks and piers and silt-free marinas for tour boat access.
- Provide recreational access to the river with boat launches, fishing piers and swimming areas.
- Coordinate competing water-dependent uses by developing and implementing harbor management plans.
- Expand the New York Department of State Consistency Review beyond actions that require state permits.
- Expand research on natural resources along the Hudson's riverfronts and share research with local governments through the Hudson River Estuary Program.

5. FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH GREEN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND ADAPTING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Challenge: Buildings create a large percent of overall greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, to meet the challenges posed by climate change, our existing infrastructure will need to be strengthened. These policy goals will require technical and financial assistance and regional planning.

Employ building and infrastructure design that reduces carbon emissions and adapts to the impacts of climate change.

- Map and identify infrastructure and natural resources at risk from rising sea levels and flooding.
- Revise coastal management and floodplain protection programs to coordinate a strategic retreat from increasingly flood-prone and tidally inundated areas, including the designation of a coastal protection zone based on updated projections of sea level rise and coastal hazards.
- Direct Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative funding for smart growth and adaptation planning, and enhanced climate change impact forecasting.
- Amend building codes to include advanced performance standards in energy efficiency, wastewater management and water conservation.
- Review and amend specifications for storm water and transportation infrastructure to accommodate future climate scenarios.
- Undertake a citizen carbon footprint-reduction campaign.
- Reuse existing buildings as much as possible.
- Make sure existing incentives for building reuse remain in place and increase public awareness of these incentives.

6. IMPROVE OUR AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Increase air and water quality to a level that exceeds federal and state standards.

- Use water quality data gathered and analyzed through state-of-the-art water quality testing programs to educate citizens.
- Address remaining sources of water pollution through maximum use of Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development in combination with “end of pipe” infrastructure improvements.
- Require combined sewer overflow Long Term Control Plans. Incorporate the maximum use of green infrastructure/ along with ‘end of pipe’ infrastructure improvements, to virtually eliminate these polluting discharges.
- Encourage the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to fund Water Quality Improvement projects to help waterfront municipalities bring their wastewater treatment facilities into compliance.

- Organize a Valley-wide coalition of diverse stakeholders to work with the congressional delegation to fund wastewater treatment infrastructure upgrades and repairs.
- Permanently ban on industrial gas drilling in the Catskills and New York City Watershed.
- Implement a Hudson Valley wide program to minimize or eliminate the application of road salt.
- Work with municipalities and counties on the mid and upper Hudson to maximize the use of green infrastructure strategies to reduce storm water runoff.
- Protect streams and encourage watershed management organizations to set and meet watershed goals for these tributaries.
- Establish a New York State diesel emissions reduction fund to provide incentives for municipalities and private fleet owners to decrease emissions from heavy-duty diesel engines.
- Reduce the use of open burning and outdoor wood boilers.

7. DEVELOP CLEAN AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY

Transform the Hudson River Valley into a model and showcase for clean, safe and renewable energy.

- Implement the New York State Energy Plan adopted in December 2009. The plan will provide emphasis on energy efficiency, demand management, improved transmission capacity, repowering, renewable and clean distributed energy and storage.
- Incentivize distributed generation by requiring utilities to buy back power from individual and commercial generators at market rates.
- Identify and rank dirtiest plants on the Hudson and in New York City. Direct utilities to commit 20% of their portfolios to Purchase Power Agreements issued to incentivize the repowering of older facilities to make them cleaner.
- Reauthorize Article X power plant siting law. The new law should create incentives to expedite new clean generation power plants.

- Support reform of federal regulations to expedite permitting of small hydro power plants.
- Develop programs to encourage retrofitting the existing building stock to implement cost-effective energy efficiency measures and install renewable energy systems.
- Implement Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) bond programs to fund energy efficiency investments and renewable energy systems.
- Ensure that proceeds from the sale of carbon allowances through Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auctions are used for carbon-reducing activities.
- Compel the closure of the Indian Point nuclear plant after its current license expires.

8. CREATE CONDITIONS TO ALLOW FOR HEALTHY FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

Restore the Hudson River ecosystem to a stable, thriving and productive ecological condition that permits sustainable recreational use and enjoyment of the River and the Hudson Valley

- Fund Governor Paterson's American Shad Recovery Plan.
- Support the Department of Environmental Conservation's efforts to evaluate and consider options for restricting the herring fishery. Adopt a herring recovery plan.
- Support the Department of Environmental Conservation's efforts to evaluate options for sustaining the striped bass fishery.
- Support the completion of the Atlantic sturgeon recovery program including three additional years of support to establish a juvenile index method.
- Develop and implement recovery plans for river herring, striped bass and other species in decline.

- Reinstate requirement, as part of SPDES permit, that HR power plants continue data collection on fish mortality.
- Compel New York State to define “Best Technology Available,” as closed cycle cooling or its equivalent and to require that all HR estuary plants meet that standard.
- Encourage the Department of Environmental Conservation’s new ecosystem management approach to addressing multiple problems with multiple strategies.
- Identify opportunities for “softening” shoreline edges (i.e., from bulkheads to rip-rap or natural/barrier-less shorelines to restore riparian habitat for spawning, feeding, and protection from predators.
- Establish an estuary preserve to coordinate state and private management of public and private conservation lands along the estuary.

9. CLEANUP AND REDEVELOP BROWNFIELDS

- Remediate General Electric’s PCB contamination in the River and in the communities in the Hudson Valley .
- Complete the remediation of Newtown Creek and the Gowanus Canal under a strong, well-funded Superfund law.
- Complete the remediation of PCBs and other contaminants in the Hudson River, including the ARCO/Anaconda Copper and Wire site in Hastings.
- Maintain and reform the State brownfields law to ensure it provides financial incentives to promote brownfields redevelopment without depriving the state of much needed tax revenue;
- Work with federal legislators to reinstate fees on industry and rebuild the “Superfund” so that sufficient funds will be available to remediate all sites on the National Priorities List.

10. IMPROVE ACCESS TO BOATING AND RECREATION

Establish at least one access point for all major types of recreation in the Hudson Valley

- Update Estuary Program swimming feasibility study and organize campaigns to establish new beaches or floating pools in counties that have none.
- Establish campaigns to construct new boat and kayak launches, provide funding to stabilize and improve existing boat access facilities, acquire marinas and boat clubs that go out of business and re-establish them as public access sites.
- Develop river-wide plan to coordinate and economize efforts by private and public “yacht clubs” and boat clubs to safely dredge their boat basins of contaminated sediment.

11. DEVELOP PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Educate the public about the economic, recreational, spiritual and health-related benefits of a clean environment.

- Disseminate statistics and case studies demonstrating that communities that invest in open space and environmental protection experience economic benefits.
- Review and strengthen environmental curricula in the public school system and throughout all the Valley’s private schools.
- Actively advise municipal government on the benefits and strategies for environmental protection.
- Engage schools, families and policymakers in river education and recreation, to enable people to make a personal connection to nature via the Hudson Valley environment