

Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trusts

2025 grants award summary

Roundout-Esopus Land Conservancy, Ulster County: \$160,850 to purchase a conservation easement that will protect 19 acres of diverse forestland adjacent to Minnewaska State Park in the town of Wawarsing. The easement will protect Mine Hole Brook, which contains brook trout and is a tributary to Roundout Creek. The easement will also ensure that the area surrounding the Mine Hole Trail, a popular and heavily used recreation area, remains natural and undisturbed. The current owner is interested in proactively managing the woodlands for habitat, with a focus on improving the health and ecological diversity of the forest.

Hudson Taconic Lands, Rensselaer County: \$265,000 to purchase a conservation easement on the 288-acre Wheeler Mountain Escarpment in the towns of Brunswick and Grafton. The land is 100% forested and is adjacent to the recently protected 1,100-acre Camp Rotary conservation easement. The easement will protect Wheeler Mountain and the Quaken Kill, home to critical habitat and part of larger initiative to create a four-mile contiguous corridor of protected forest along the western escarpment of the Rensselaer Plateau.

Genesee Valley Conservancy, Steuben County: \$350,000 to purchase a conservation easement on the 841-acre Beckhorn property, located in the towns of Rexville and West Union. This is one of the largest forested parcels remaining in Steuben County and will connect to other protected land. The property's forest blends species found in both temperate and boreal climates, making for a diverse mix of trees and plants, providing habitat for numerous species of birds and mammals.

Scenic Hudson, Dutchess County: \$125,000 to purchase a conservation easement on the 137-acre Royal Strawberry Hill Farm and Preserve in the town of Poughkeepsie. The property, once part of a network of farms, has mostly reverted to forest in an area under extreme development pressure. The city of Poughkeepsie has identified the property in its open space plan and has designated the land as an urban greenway. The land hosts a limestone woodland forest community, wetlands and streams, habitat for birds, mammals and amphibians, and connects some of the last remaining forests in the area.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Herkimer County (two projects): \$141,122 to conserve the 135-acre Kimak Forest property and \$161,175 to conserve the 182-acre Grafer Forest property, both located in the town of Russia. Both properties are part of a large forested focus area that includes other conservation easements held by the land trust as well as additional forestland that is in the process of being protected with the help of FCELT funds. These new easements will build on THTLT's conservation efforts surrounding Hinkley State Forest. The majority of each property is characterized by forested land that contains a mix of softwood and hardwood species, which play a crucial role in providing habitat for a diverse array of wildlife. Several streams cross the property and flow into West Canada Creek, an important water source.

Scenic Hudson, Columbia County: \$250,000 to purchase a conservation easement on the 272-acre West Family Land property in the towns of New Lebanon and Canaan. The land was once part of a larger 19th century Shaker community and is adjacent to conserved land, including Bates Memorial State Park in Massachusetts. The forest is a mix of hardwood and softwood and includes habitat for several bird and mammal species.

Genesee Valley Conservancy, Livingston County: \$227,220 to purchase a conservation easement on the 135-acre Pokey Moonshine Hollow property, located in the town of Springwater. This land is 99% forested and situated within the watershed of Hemlock Lake, a drinking water source for the city of Rochester. The forest contains chestnut trees that have recovered from the blight, along with a diverse mix of plant species. The landowners will continue to manage the forest in the same manner as it has been managed over the past 75 years.

Otsego Land Trust, Otsego County: \$54,250 to purchase a conservation easement on the 41-acre Burr Forest property in the town of Westford. The land is adjacent to the popular Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park. The easement property is 90% forested, and includes wetlands and hemlock stands, along with large concentrations of native plants. The land is under extreme residential development pressure, as the landowners have been approached many times with offers to buy the property. The landowners will manage the forest for wildlife and the health of the forest.