



# Quality Communities

Summer 2003  
Vol. II Issue 2

George E. Pataki  
Governor

THE QUALITY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE demonstrates New York State's commitment to working with local government leaders to find smart, innovative solutions to strengthen our economy, improve the quality of our natural environment and enhance the livability of the place we call "home."

## Will Congress Reestablish the State and Local Side Of the Land and Water Conservation Fund?

A formal effort is underway to protect municipal and State Park outdoor recreation projects. This spring, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Bernadette Castro announced that the Empire State Task Force for Stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was reconvening to highlight and promote the importance of this federal funding source in protecting New York's natural resources and outdoor recreation projects in local communities.

**"We need to act now, to once again raise awareness of the fund's value to our federal representatives and regain momentum.."**

—Bernadette Castro  
Commissioner

"We need to act now, to once again raise awareness of the fund's value to our federal representatives and regain momentum and progress made as a result of Governor Pataki's leadership in directing our earlier advocacy.

In 1998, Governor Pataki created the Empire State Task Force for LWCF. Through the success of the Task Force efforts and many other groups, since 2000, Congress has appropriated \$270 million, with approximately \$7 million for New York for the 2002 LWCF program. However, for 2003, there currently is a 32% reduction in stateside support for New York.

The Task Force is comprised of six State agencies and 18 municipal and environmental organizations. Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Erin Crotty who co-chairs the Task Force, added, "The

LWCF has been a cornerstone of the cooperative efforts between the State and federal government to preserve critical natural resources... and we encourage our congressional representatives to once again support these

efforts by providing appropriate funding under the LWCF."

Last year, LWCF supported grants of \$3.2 million to 21 municipalities and another \$3.2 million for 15 state parks projects.

## From Vision to Reality



Views of the Albany bridge as it appeared in the *Quality Communities Task Force Report*.

In the Quality Communities Task Force Report of 2001, we included illustrations of a proposed pedestrian bridge in the City of Albany. "Creating a vision for a downtown can be a way to mobilize and inspire citizens to develop consensus and to solve problems," the Report stated. In this instance, the community planned to link the downtown with the city's Hudson River waterfront and thereby solve the problem of public access over a major highway. Using design grants provided by the New York State Department of State through the Environmental Protection Fund, Albany began construction of the bridge later that year.

Governor George E. Pataki and Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings (pictured above) led a parade of pedestrians over the bridge at its opening last August.

## Quality Communities

is a publication of the  
NYS Department of State.

**Randy A. Daniels**  
*Secretary of State*

For information or a CD-ROM of the Quality Communities Report, *State and Local Governments Partnering for a Better New York*, call 518-473-3355. The report is available at [www.dos.state.ny.us/qc](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/qc).

Member agencies of the Quality Communities Working Group are dedicated to assisting local governments in implementing effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation strategies that promote both economic vitality and environmental protection.

### Quality Communities Interagency Working Group Members

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**Secretary of State Randy A. Daniels**,  
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NYS Thruway Authority

## Putting Wind to Work

In his 2003 State of the State address, Governor Pataki "directed the Public Service Commission to implement a Renewable Portfolio Standard – a program which will guarantee that within the next 10 years, at least 25% of the electricity bought in New York will come from renewable energy resources like solar, wind power or fuel cells."

Today, the State is producing 17-18% of its electric power from renewable sources. To satisfy the RPS and help turn the State into a national leader in this field, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) now offers several programs for communities interested in

(Program Opportunity Notice 796 [www.nyserdera.org/upcoming.html](http://www.nyserdera.org/upcoming.html).) The goal of this program is to support activities at the local level for the orderly and efficient development of wind power in participating communities.

Projects funded under this program will encourage appropriate siting through sound local zoning/permitting regulations, accumulated wind data, or other related local initiatives that can be used for the development of wind power facilities. Sample projects may include: identifying and creating zones where wind development is advanced as an acceptable land use; organizing land owners on promising tracts for the



Dairy cows appear content to share their pasture with new wind turbines.

renewable energy. In this, the first in a series of articles from NYSEDA, *QC News* takes a closer look at Wind Energy.

Through its **New York Energy Smart<sup>SM</sup>** program, NYSEDA has supported the construction and operation of 41.5 megawatts (MW) of wind energy to date. By supporting wind resource prospecting efforts at promising sites and with plans to assist financially with development, NYSEDA anticipates upwards of 500 MW of new wind powered generation across the State.

A program is currently being designed to help communities prepare for possible siting of wind power facilities

purpose of negotiating land use rights; and establishing community-based wind power cooperatives.

Helpful information available to communities from NYSEDA online include a *Wind Development Guide for Local Authorities*, a brochure on *Wind for Commercial Applications*, the *Clean Power Estimator* (an economic evaluation tool for small wind systems) and examples of environmental assessment forms for two successful wind projects.

([www.nyserdera.org/energyresources/wind.html](http://www.nyserdera.org/energyresources/wind.html))

## Rural Sprawl is Subject at Northeast State Planning Leadership Retreat

In addition to an update on the Quality Communities initiative, New York State provided the keynote address on May 1 at the fifth annual Northeast State Planning Leadership Retreat,\* held this year in Burlington, Vermont. Author of *When City and Country Collide*, and co-author of *Holding Our Ground: Protecting America's Farms and Farmland*, Professor Tom Daniels from the Department of Geography and Planning at SUNY-Albany spoke to planning officials from 10 states and the District of Columbia about "Smart Growth and Rural Communities." A summary of his comments on farmland protection follows:

*Farming is first and foremost a business. Profitability means being the low cost producer of bulk commodities or finding a niche market. (And, profitability is a challenge when milk prices are at a 20 year low.) Looking to the future, passing the farm on to the next generation depends upon whether there are children who want to farm and who can afford to take over the farm.*

*Meanwhile, the average age of farmers in the Northeast is about 55 years old. This means that hundreds of thousands of acres will change hands over the next 20 years. What the heirs or buyers of that land decide to do with it will have far-reaching*

*consequences for communities throughout the region. The value of farmland is almost always less than its value for growing houses or strip malls. How long can farmers resist the temptation to sell land for development?*

*Successful farmland protection depends on using a package of techniques. Good design of additions*

*countryside. This type of zoning allows some non-farm development in the countryside but not so much as to hinder farm operations. Purchase of development rights is another technique found in every state in the Northeast... [This method of] preserving farmland not only puts money in farmers' pockets, but enables planners to direct growth away from*



Photo by James Bleeker, www.JamesBleeker.com

*to villages and maintaining an edge between the village and countryside can minimize rural residential and commercial strip sprawl. Agricultural zoning based on a fixed area ration of one building lot of no more than 2 acres for every 25 acres owned is a good balance for the Northeast*

*farming areas toward places where there is adequate infrastructure to support development.*

\* The Northeast State Planning and Leadership Retreat is sponsored and organized by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Regional Plan Association.

### Input from Local Officials Sought on Farmland Protection Study

Late last year, the Advisory Council on Agriculture (ACA) and the Department of Agriculture and Markets reviewed preliminary results of a study on protecting farmland "in areas not yet experiencing strong development pressure." Since local government views and support for the Ag Districts program and other farmland protection efforts are key to their success, the ACA and the Department agreed to organize a series of regional roundtable discussions with county legislators, along with local farm

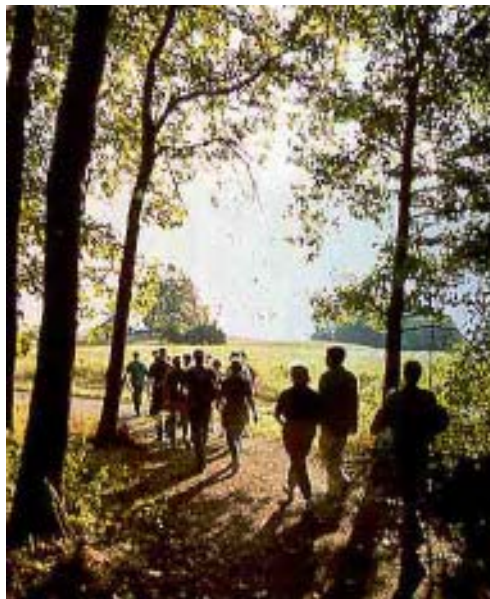
leaders, planners and others actively involved in farmland protection efforts.

The roundtables are designed to solicit suggestions regarding changes in current State programs and possible new concepts. Co-sponsored by the Genesee-Finger Lakes Planning Council, the first roundtable was held in Rochester on May 29.

For more information, contact Dan Conable at [conable@frontiernet.net](mailto:conable@frontiernet.net).

## Greenway Trail Programs Advance

Since its inception in 1991, the Hudson River Valley Greenway has been partnering with local communities, elected officials, residents, non-profit organizations and fellow State agencies to fulfill one of its core missions: the development of trails providing public access to important natural, cultural, and scenic resources. To help achieve this goal, the Greenway has



Each year, the "Ramble" introduces hundreds of new hikers to the beauty and enjoyment of the Greenway's network of trails.

developed two trail programs that may also serve as models for other regions in New York State. In an earlier issue of *QC News* (Fall 2002), we covered the launch of the 158-mile Greenway Water Trail and how it promotes Governor Pataki's Quality Communities Principles by encouraging economic development and downtown revitalization that is compatible with environmental protection. There are now more than 60 access points and a series of campsites for multi-day excursions on the river.

Showcasing the trail, the Great Hudson River Paddle is an annual event attracting hundreds of participants in a 10-day

excursion. This year's Paddle goes into the water from July 3 - 12.

The "Hudson River Valley Ramble" is a September event to raise awareness of the Greenway landside trail system. This Trail Program helps communities establish a trail system that links cultural and historic sites, parks, natural open spaces, and community centers as well as providing access to the Hudson River. Consistent with the State's strong tradition of home rule, trail development is done by request and permission of the landowner, often a municipality, land conservancy or nonprofit. Additionally, the Greenway does not own any of the trails it helps to develop, but rather seeks to keep ownership in local hands.



Gerard Smith Photo

Hikers enjoy the third annual Hudson River Valley Ramble near Norrie Point in Dutchess County.

For more information about these trail programs call (518) 473-3835 or visit the Greenway's website at [www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us](http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us).

## Policy on Environmental Justice Now in Effect

In 2001, the Quality Communities Task Force recommended "the incorporation of appropriate policies to bring environmental justice to the Quality Communities program." This spring, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Erin Crotty announced the completion of DEC's Environmental Justice Policy. Aimed at ensuring fair treatment and promoting meaningful involvement of minority and low-income communities in DEC's permitting and project review process, the policy became effective April 18, 2003.

Based on input from DEC staff, the Environmental Justice Advisory Group and comments submitted by the public,

the policy also lays the foundation for new legislation in the area of environmental justice and enhanced regulations. The policy contains a detailed implementation schedule and concrete steps that will serve to address environmental justice concerns. Considered a "living"

**"State decision makers should be cognizant of the impact their decisions will have throughout a community, region and the State."**

—QC Recommendation # 37

document, the policy will be revised regularly to account for new information and issues encountered during its implementation.

The policy requires the undertaking of initiatives such as:

- providing enhanced accessibility to public permit information
- using geographic information system (GIS) screening tools and US Census data to identify potential environmental justice areas
- enhancing public participation and outreach mechanisms
- educating permit applicants about environmental justice
- developing workshops for the public to educate them on the permit review process
- securing funding and developing criteria for a technical assistance grant program.

The policy is available on DEC's website [www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us) or by calling 1-866-229-0497.



## Yonkers Rediscovered the Hudson

The third largest city in the State outside the five boroughs of New York City, Yonkers is renewing its identity as a proud Hudson River community. What was once considered the backdoor of this Westchester County municipality,



Yonkers Recreation Pier Restoration

the downtown waterfront is rapidly becoming a grand and welcoming entry. New buildings and public spaces

are infusing the area with vitality and helping to realize the community's vision for the future.

Recently, as part of a process to create the Yonkers Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), planners sought public input to craft a plan for the rest of the City's seven-mile waterfront. The LWRP builds community consensus, lays out policies and proposes land and water to guide future development in the coastal area.

The community now envisions more than four miles of new trails featuring a waterfront promenade, an enhanced campus at the Hudson River Museum, a naturalized boulevard, intersection, and gateway treatment for key streets, and a Cinematic Village mixed use development. The latter describes a redevelopment that builds from an existing stage lighting company and proposed film studio conversion of underutilized warehousing. The future district may include a screening theater, walk of fame sidewalk, Academy of Cinematic Arts, film festival venue, and theme-related boutiques.

The plan also calls for a new mix of uses along the Hudson River, including light industrial, commercial, museum/interpretive, and residential development. Proposals under consideration for the riverfront include a public park and gathering space along a waterfront esplanade, a terraced lawn amphitheater, a waterside River Interpretive Center, playing fields, and scenic trails.

The City is working with the recently-established not-for-profit Groundwork Yonkers to bring together business, government, neighborhoods, nonprofit organizations, and funding sources for

specific projects. This is part of the Groundwork USA initiative run by the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails program, with funds from the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program. This program helps to develop and expand local partnerships to transform urban neighborhoods.

The City's rediscovery of the Hudson River was assisted by the Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program administered by the New York State Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources.



Now fully restored, this building welcomed a new restaurant to the district.

### Visit the new Quality Communities Clearinghouse Website

[www.dos.state.ny.us/QC](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/QC)

To make it easier for all communities to take advantage of State programs and assistance, the 25 members of the Quality Communities Interagency Working Group collaborated with the Department of State to create a Quality Communities Clearinghouse Website. Organized by the

eight QC Principles, the Clearinghouse is a quick and easy-to-use directory of grant information, technical assistance, success stories, data, news and other tools to focus creative energy at both the State and local levels on Quality Communities in the making.

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If you or people on your staff wish to receive *Quality Communities News* online, please email us at [QC@dos.state.ny.us](mailto:QC@dos.state.ny.us)

## Get Out and Walk Campaign Launched in Broome County

On May 1, United Health Services began a unique walking campaign in local media, in the streets and on the trails of Broome County. “*BC Walks*” is a health initiative to promote increased physical activity and reduce the burden of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. The intensive, eight week, multimedia campaign set a goal of getting 10,000 local residents to walk 10 minutes a day or more.

*BC Walks* is funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control through the NYS Department of Health.

The *BC Walks* message is being aired through an extensive advertising campaign on local television and radio along with print ads. Walking programs have been launched by area schools, work sites and civic groups. According to United Health Services President Peter McGinn, “Unlike many health campaigns that try to change a person’s lifestyle, we are offering people one simple, painless activity that will yield significant health benefits for themselves and their families.”

In addition to motivating people to walk more, the campaign has tackled a number of Quality Communities Principles by partnering with transportation professionals in the region to encourage safer and more pleasant places for walking, recreation and transportation modes outside of the car. Further enhancing these efforts, the Metropolitan Planning Organization serving Broome County was one of nine MPO’s nationwide to be selected for project funding by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through the National Center for Bicycling and Walking. (The Genesee Transportation Council also was selected.) The MPO project invited national experts on pedestrian friendly environments to conduct eight workshops on Walkable Communities throughout the region while the *BC Walks* campaign is being aired. The workshops bring together health,



The *BC Walks* campaign kick-off event demonstrated just how unique the message and method of the campaign would be.

transportation and land use professionals, local officials and interested citizens to learn how to make their communities more inviting “to get out and walk.”

“Community campaigns like this, which include media, community events and improvements in safety of the pedestrian environment, have been shown to be one of the best ways of increasing physical activity rates,” says Deborah Spicer, with the Healthy Heart Program of the NYS Department of Health. “If we can increase physical activity rates by 5%, we can cut medical costs by \$180 million annually in New York.” The Healthy Heart Program is working closely with *BC Walks* to

**“If we can increase physical activity rates by 5%, we can cut medical costs by \$180 million annually in New York.”**

—Deborah Spicer  
Healthy Heart Program  
NYS Department of Health

evaluate the effects of the campaign on physical activity levels among adults in Broome County, particularly those with high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol levels.

To learn more about the campaign, along with suggested walking programs, health information, and walking tips, go to [www.BC.Walks.com](http://www.BC.Walks.com).