

Shaker Swamp Conservancy
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Request for Proposals: Trail Feasability Study

The Shaker Swamp Conservancy seeks proposals to prepare a feasibility study for a recreational and educational trail to access the Shaker Swamp in the town of New Lebanon, New York.

Background

The Shaker Swamp is a 400 acre freshwater wetland located at the base of the Taconic mountain range in New Lebanon, New York. The swamp is a New York State regulated "freshwater wetland" and is also subject to federal jurisdiction under the US Army Corps of Engineers. It supports habitat for rare and uncommon native plants and animals. It is composed of a variety of habitats including: marsh, wet meadow, mixed hardwood, conifer forest, upland meadows, upland shrub and calcareous cliffs and boulders. The swamp has also been the source of native and cultivated plants that have been used by native Americans, the Mount Lebanon Shaker community and the historic Tilden Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company for creating herbal medicines. The historical confluence of Native Americans, the Shaker Community and the early pharmaceutical companies combine with the unique ecological environment to make the swamp unique, special and an irreplaceable resource. This short video, <https://vimeo.com/700585630>, made by local filmmaker Ted Timreck, introduces the unique features of the swamp.

Established in 2011, The Shaker Swamp Conservancy (SSC) works to preserve the swamp and to promote understanding of its natural resources and cultural heritage. The Conservancy strives to create opportunities for public access, education and recreation. The Conservancy, a 501-C3 non-profit corporation, is chartered by the New York State Department of Education to "promote the public awareness and understanding of this natural resource and its rich human heritage. The Shaker Swamp Conservancy will create opportunities for public education and recreation."

The Shaker Swamp Conservancy proposes the construction and stewardship of a public access trail into the Swamp. We envision a walking trail that will provide "nearby nature" for the residents of New Lebanon, a much needed natural refuge for the community and an educational setting for school groups and organizations. The unique ecology of the Swamp, including the presence of rare plant species, as well as its status as a state and federally regulated wetland, necessitates the need for careful planning. The Conservancy assumes that any pedestrian access would include a trail with bridges and boardwalks and parking for at least one trailhead.

Scope of Work

The Conservancy seeks to hire a qualified professional consultant to develop a Feasibility Study for Public Access and a Trail for the Swamp. The study should:

1. Propose alignment(s) and extent of the trail.

2. Consider the fragility of the wetlands, assess the impacts of various approaches and develop scenarios that will provide access with a minimum impact to the environment and avoidance of rare and protected species.
3. Describe all required approvals from State and Federal Resource Protection Agencies for implementing the project and provide guidance on navigating the approval processes.
4. Locate at least one trailhead, and more if feasible, for public access to the trail.
5. Engage local community members and Town leadership, neighbors, identified user groups including the Shaker Museum, Darrow School, local Public Schools, and representatives of the Mohican tribe, to gauge everyone's interest, concerns, and support for the Project.
6. Consider alternatives that could connect the trail to the trails planned for public lands on the Taconic Ridge which are part of the Federal Forest Legacy Area, and a local New York State Forest Legacy Project and those trails listed as high priority in the New York State Open Space Plan.
7. Assess how to connect to trails located on adjacent property owned by the Shaker Museum and Library.

To summarize, the Feasibility Study will identify a pathway into the Swamp that achieves the best balance among the following objectives: avoid adverse impacts to rare plants, maximize the likelihood of obtaining governmental approvals, minimize construction difficulties and cost and maximize opportunities for the public to observe the aspects of the Swamp that make it special.

The Shaker Swamp Conservancy owns approximately 30 acres in the swamp with frontage on Routes 20 and 22 adjacent to the Roaring 20s Brewery. The largest landowner in the swamp is the Darrow School which has enthusiastically supported the project. We have been in touch with most of the other landowners and will hopefully have their support as well.

The members of the Shaker Swamp Conservancy will be available to assist in any way possible on a volunteer basis.

The county tax maps are available to show the landowners in the swamp. The Conservancy will also provide a preliminary ecological description of the Swamp that was prepared by Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program in 2012. The flora, fauna, and habitat inventory prepared by Farmscape Ecology is exhaustive and will be an important tool for the consultant to use in preparing the Trail Feasibility Study.

Project Deliverables

The Report of the Feasibility Study, which can be delivered as an electronic document, should contain at least the following:

1. Two or three alternative routes for a trail that would meet the objectives defined above. The description of each alternative should include the following :
 - a. Annotated map showing the route of the trail and location of potential bridges, boardwalks, or bog bridging, and other material (packed soil, crusher fines, pavement) for the tread for sections of the trail, if applicable.

- b. List and location of the detail for any Right of Way or other Easements needed from landowners.
 - c. List and Description of permits required from local, state or federal agencies.
 - d. Cost/budget and timeline for construction of trail
 - e. Description and costs for trail maintenance for each alternative.
 - f. Trailhead location including parking area, size and construction materials and corresponding permitting and land acquisition requirements.
 - g. Pros and cons of each alternatives and recommendations, including a "no build" recommendation, if appropriate.
2. A summary of the process and results of the outreach to stakeholders listed above (#5) under the engagement strategy. This description should include obstacles and opportunities for support and stewardship.

Budget and Timetable for the Feasability Study

The feasibility study will be funded with a \$7500 grant from The Hudson River Greenway and \$4500 in matching funds from the Shaker Swamp Conservancy. In addition, as mentioned above, members of the Shaker Swamp Conservancy and the New Lebanon community will be available to assist on a volunteer basis.

We would like to receive all proposals by May 31, 2022. We will make decision in time for the work to begin on July 1. We would like to receive a preliminary report by November 1.

Please submit proposal by email to bshenker@gmail.com. Any questions can be addressed by email as well. Phone calls or zoom meetings can also be arranged.