

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE SHAKER SWAMP



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WANT TO BUY A SWAMP? We do! Want to preserve an ecologically and historically important part of the New Lebanon landscape? We do! The Shaker Swamp Conservancy, Inc. is spearheading the preservation of an ecological treasure and the creation of a public conservation area in the heart of New Lebanon. We need your help.

Imagine a vibrant, natural wetland, available to the public for walking, bird watching, and photographing sunsets, accessible right from the heart of New Lebanon's commercial center. Our community has the chance to make this a reality in 2014.

For thousands of years, the Shaker Swamp, fed by the nearby warm, mineral-rich Lebanon Springs, has been home to an unusual diversity of animals and plants. Native Americans hunted, fished and gathered medicinal herbs in the Swamp. In the nineteenth century, the Swamp played an important role in the early development of the pharmaceutical industry, initially by the Mount Lebanon Shaker community and later by New Lebanon's Tilden family.

Now the Shaker Swamp is poised to become one of the major recreational, historic, and environmental features in the region. Over the past several years, regional, state, and national funders have responded to a call by local citizens concerned about preserving the Shaker Swamp and the adjacent Taconic Ridge, and today over \$2 million in public funds has been committed to protect nearly 1400 acres in and around the Swamp for public benefit.

Those who care the most about the Swamp's preservation have the opportunity to fully leverage these commitments, to secure the Swamp's future, and to build a public gateway into these valuable wetlands. The Shaker Swamp Conservancy is raising the necessary funds to purchase key parcels of Swamp property and adjoining road frontage, to make the required site improvements for public access and signage and to build the boardwalk and trails that will enable the public to enjoy the Swamp.



ABOUT THE SHAKER SWAMP

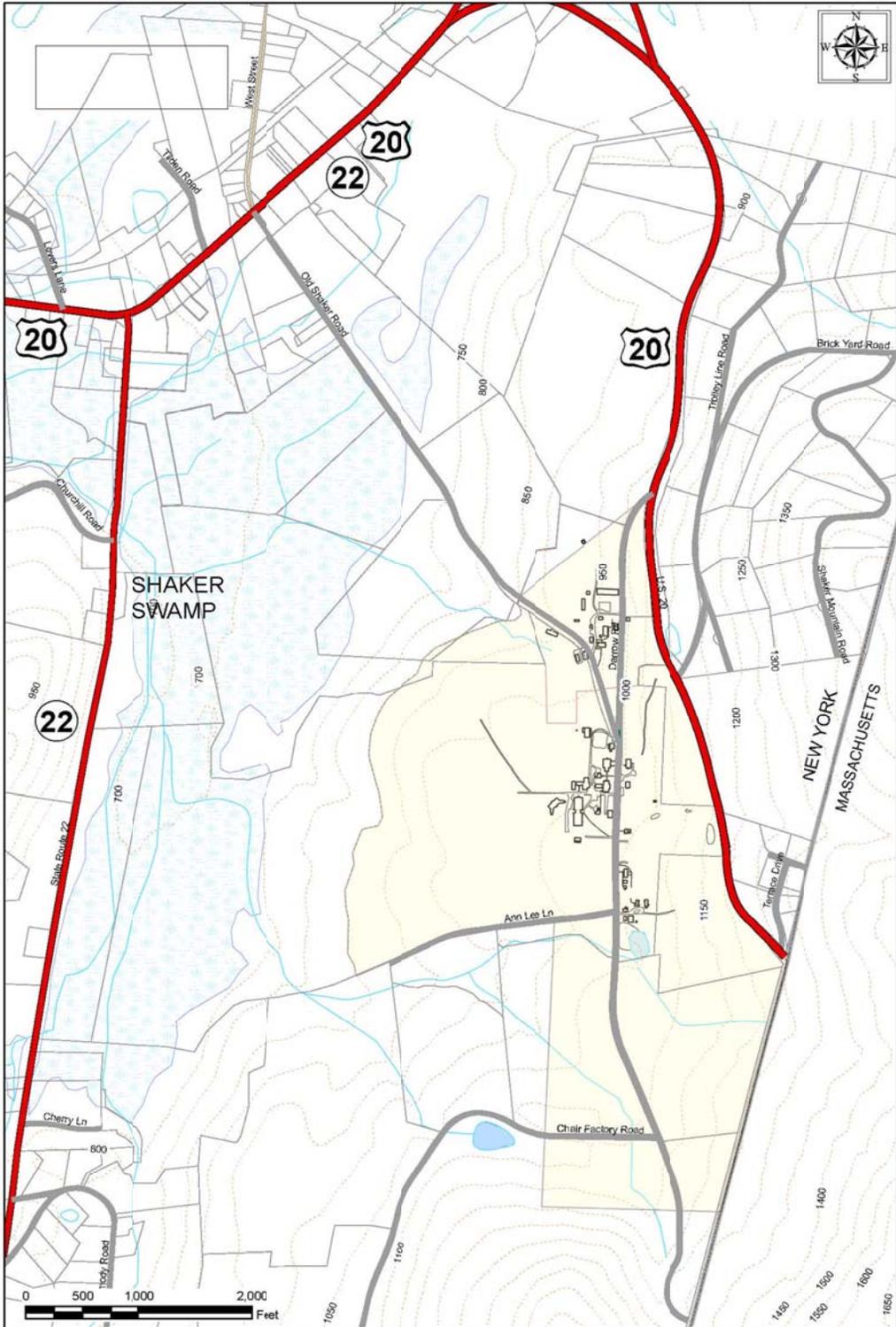
The Shaker Swamp is a 400-acre freshwater wetland located at the foot of the Taconic mountain range in eastern Columbia County, New York. This massive wetland is located in New Lebanon, a central crossroads connecting the Hudson Valley to western New England. Our focus is on the area south of Route 20 bounded on the west by Route 22 and the east by Shaker and Darrow Roads.

The Swamp's unusual ecological profile as a habitat for rare and uncommon native plants and animals is directly tied to its water sources in the nearby warm Lebanon Springs, which flows year-round, and in the surrounding mountain drainages that run through calcareous rock formations. The Shaker Swamp contains a variety of habitats – marsh, wet meadow, mixed hardwood, conifer forest, upland meadows, upland shrub, and calcareous cliffs and boulders. Several areas of particular ecological interest, including a rocky forested stream, a potentially ancient swamp and upland forest remnants, and calcareous cliffs and boulders make for exciting areas of study. Around the calcium-rich rocks and cliffs there are a number of ferns and other herbaceous species that are rare in Columbia County.

The Swamp is a refuge for many mammals and birds, including mink, fisher, bobcat, barred owl, great blue heron, sapsucker, and woodcock. Beaver are year-round residents in the Swamp. Reptiles and amphibians abound, including the wood frog and spotted salamander, species that are increasingly vulnerable because of their reliance on vernal pools. There are a number of rare wetland dragonflies and butterflies in the Swamp, such as eyed brown, West Virginia white, and the mulberry wing, which depends on wetland sedges as host plants for its caterpillars. More information on the Swamp's ecology can be found in the Ecology Report, a link to which is on our website, shakerswamp.org.

The Swamp holds a special place in medicinal history. Starting with the Native Americans and continuing with the adjacent Shaker settlement at Mount Lebanon (now a National Historic Landmark) and the Tilden Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company at the wetland's edge, the Swamp has been a source of native and cultivated plants for herbal medicines. Growing in the Swamp are species of medicinal plants that were listed either in Miller's 1998 book on Shaker medicinal herbs or in Tilden & Co.'s pharmacopeia of 1852 and 1875.





ABOUT THE SHAKER SWAMP CONSERVANCY

In 2006, local community leaders and organizations formed a working group to study and promote preservation of the Swamp. Their first effort was to mobilize the community to fund the work of filmmaker Ted Timreck. In 2008, Timreck completed the 30-minute documentary, “Medicinal Wetlands,” which tells the story of the Swamp through interviews with historians, botanists, archeologists, and local residents. Over the next several years, the group worked closely with the community and Swamp landowners and secured funding for an ecological inventory, which confirmed the Swamp’s importance as an exceptional habitat for native plants and animals; a second short film, “Stone Ruins of New Lebanon,” which brought to light a possible Native American megalith at the Swamp’s edge; and an archival study of the Swamp’s history as it relates to the Shakers. The informal working group formed the 501(c)(3), not-for-profit Shaker Swamp Conservancy, Inc. in 2011 to carry forward the work of documenting and preserving the Swamp for public benefit.

The mission of the Shaker Swamp Conservancy is to preserve the Shaker Swamp and to make this unique and defining asset of the Lebanon Valley available to the public, to promote understanding of this natural resource and its human heritage, and to create related opportunities for public education and recreation.

More information about the Conservancy can be found at shakerswamp.org.

LAND CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS

As these local efforts were underway, state and federal authorities were contacted to encourage their participation in protecting the Swamp and surrounding lands. The New York State’s Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, along with the Open Space Institute, awarded the Shaker Museum|Mount Lebanon funding to extend preserved land at the historic Shaker site adjacent to the Swamp. The Columbia Land Conservancy, in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, applied for federal funding to protect forest lands in the watershed above the Swamp. In 2013, the federal Forest Legacy Project responded, awarding the State of New York \$1.9 million to pursue protection of forest lands surrounding and in the Swamp by purchasing conservation easements from major landowners.

Major landowners, including Darrow School, have responded positively to protecting the Swamp and the surrounding lands. In all some 1400 acres are targeted for conservation. In order to secure these substantial federal funds, public access to the protected land for recreation and education purposes is mandatory. The Shaker Swamp Conservancy is working to protect the heart of the Shaker Swamp and to ensure public access for passive recreation and education purposes. The Conservancy has identified two properties that will serve as a gateway from New Lebanon's busiest thoroughfare to the Swamp as well as to the major landholdings that are planned to become part of the Forest Legacy Project. Once acquired by the Conservancy, these properties will connect the commercial heart of New Lebanon to the protected lands in the Shaker Swamp. Whether the Forest Legacy Project moves forward or not, the effort to preserve and provide access to the Shaker Swamp will advance.

The ecological diversity of the Swamp and its flora and fauna habitats, including some that are sensitive and host rare species, warrants protection and conservation. The Swamp's importance to New Lebanon's contemporary residents cannot be minimized. Because the Swamp serves as the filtering agent for a large surrounding watershed before recharging our aquifer and flowing into the Wyomonack, the Kinderhook and eventually the Hudson River, long-term preservation is critical to local and regional water quality.



IMPACT

New Lebanon suffers from a lack of economic activity and recreational opportunities, though it is located at a well-travelled crossroads and possesses rich historic and ecological assets. The Shaker Swamp Conservancy will purchase, preserve, and make a portion of the Swamp accessible to the public. Made available for public access, the Shaker Swamp will be an engine for economic revitalization, bringing tourists to the area and creating a better environment for existing and potential businesses and residents.

By creating a destination that combines recreation with education about the history and ecology of the Swamp, the Swamp will offer tourists and local residents a destination experience. More than 8,000 cars a day pass through New Lebanon as they travel to Albany, Vermont, Massachusetts or Connecticut, bringing a myriad of tourists and recreation enthusiasts to nearby destinations. But only a few stop in New Lebanon. The Shaker Swamp can change that. Visiting the Swamp will become easy for thousands of travelers a year. Visitors will be able to identify the Shaker Swamp as they drive through town and will be able to park their cars and visit it. The Swamp will become a highly visible local draw.

Visitors and residents will enter the Swamp on boardwalks and trails and will be offered year-round education programming through onsite kiosks, guided and self-guided tours, and related programming in and around the Swamp. In concert with local education partners, including the Lebanon Valley Historical Society, Columbia Land Conservancy, Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program, Darrow School, New Lebanon Library and Shaker Museum|Mount Lebanon, visitors will learn about the changing ecosystem, the interaction between landscape and culture through history and how Native Americans, the Shakers, and the Tildens relied on strong connections to the lands in the Swamp and what they could provide.

With parking and kiosks on the main route through town on Rtes. 20/22, and with accessible boardwalks and trails, local residents and visitors will enjoy a variety of experiences in all seasons – a quiet and meditative nature walk, a birding outing, an opportunity to learn about Swamp ecology from a series of informative displays, or a chance for exercise.

The Shaker Swamp is a vital local and regional asset that must be preserved for public benefit. The first step in making this a reality is to obtain and protect the key gateway land parcels, followed in short order by the installation of signage, information kiosks, parking, and boardwalks and trails.



WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER INVESTING IN THE SHAKER SWAMP?

- *PRESERVE AN IMPORTANT ECOLOGICAL RESOURCE*
- *DEVELOP A NEW PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA*
- *CREATE A DESTINATION SITE IN THE HEART OF NEW LEBANON*
- *PROMOTE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION*
- *JUMPSTART A PROVEN SOURCE OF ECONOMIC VITALITY*
- *INSPIRE OTHERS TO SUPPORT THIS LANDMARK PROJECT*