

CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY

2020 IN BRIEF



SUPPORTING WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

monitoring

- Species monitoring continued: Beaver, fisher, turtle, American toad, and salamanders.



protection

- Installed 400 more feet of bog bridging to reduce erosion.
- Posted 20+ signs, containing rules to lessen human impacts.
- Launched successful Trail Stewards program.

habitat

- Reduced invasive plant populations.
- SUNY Geology club removed 1,000+ lbs of metal trash.

MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

access

- Established new entrance and trails
- Focused improvements on easier access, especially for residents of Woodland Pond.

community

- Expanded social media presence and fostered an interactive Facebook page.

volunteerism

- Logged over 1,000 volunteer hours.
- Increased engagement - pool of volunteers quadrupled in size.



DEVELOPMENT AND CAMPAIGNS

membership

- Founding Member campaign brought in over 200 members.



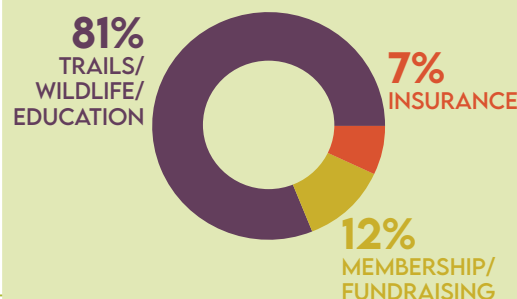
fundraising

- Online Raffle with donated prizes garnered \$5,000.

legacy

- Planned giving incentive campaign - \$20K pledged

TOTAL EXPENSES \$25,496

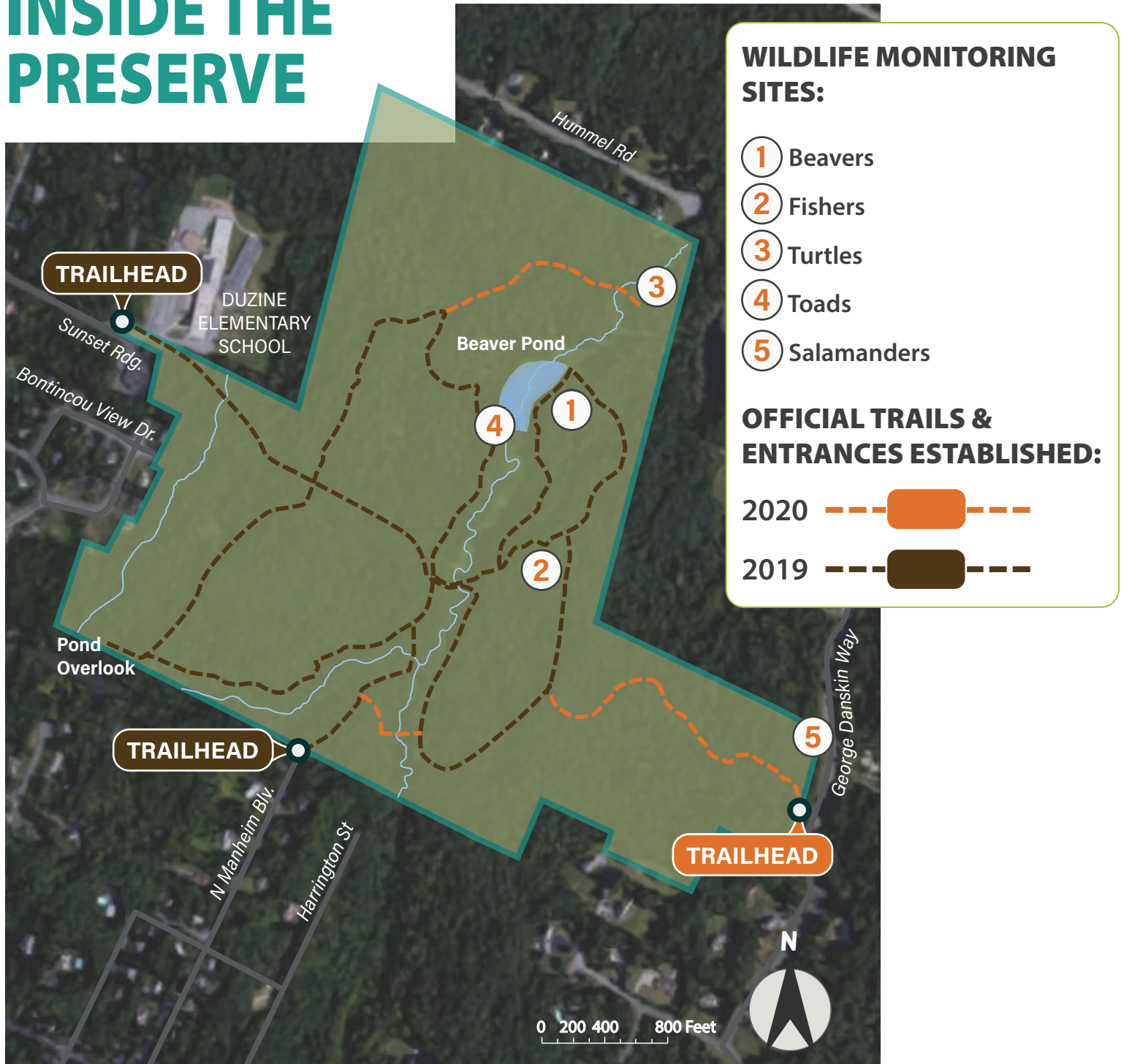


TOTAL REVENUE \$23,452

**100%
DONOR
SUPPORT**



A LOOK INSIDE THE PRESERVE



Our mission is to promote and protect biodiversity and wildlife habitats, while providing recreational and educational opportunities within the Mill Brook Preserve.

MILL BROOK PRESERVE INC.

P.O. Box 1107, New Paltz, NY 12561 | info@millbrookpreserve.org | www.millbrookpreserve.org

Mill brook preserve Inc. (MBPI)

Annual report 2020

Our mission is to promote and protect biodiversity and wildlife habitats, while providing recreational and educational opportunities within the Mill Brook Preserve.

BOARD/STAFF/LIAISONS

Board of Directors

Tal Ilany Seweryn, President
Lynn Bowdery, Treasurer
Gerald Benjamin, Secretary
Jim Delaune
Jonathan Katz

We welcomed two new board members in 2020:

Kara Belinsky
Alex Bartholomew

Staff

Julie Seyfert-Lillis, Executive Director (ED)

Liaisons

Paul Fargis, Woodland Pond Conservation Committee
Ted Nitza, Walden Environmental Engineering
KT Tobin, Village of New Paltz

Accomplishments in 2020

CONTRACTS

- An Amendment 1 to the Recreation plan was approved by Walkkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT), Town and Village.

FUNDRAISING

Membership Incentive

- **Founding Member Campaign:** This campaign ran between 2019-2020 and brought in 207 Founding members, 175 of whom joined in 2020.
- **Legacy Circle:** We raised \$10,000 in order to receive a \$10,000 match from a generous donor (we will receive the remaining funds in January 2020). The total \$20,000 is seeding our Legacy Circle fund. For each person who pledges to name Mill

Brook Preserve Inc. in their will, trust, or insurance policy, \$500 will become available for our organization (the 20K funds 40 pledges).

- **Online raffle:** \$5,000 raised via raffle. All items donated by community members.
- **Social Media:** We had numerous successful small fundraisers using Facebook. Our Facebook following grew significantly since 2019. Private Facebook group: 317 members. Public group: 648 followers. Instagram: 225 followers.
- **Email/Mailing:** 300 people on our mailing list. Major donors identified.

Donation of Services/Volunteerism

- Web services – free server hosting
- Trail stewardship – 400+ hours
- Trail crew – 400+ hours
- Sign making – 15 hours
- Print design – 30 hours
- Poison Ivy Control – 3 hours of poison ivy removal (pulling)
- Financial – 30 hours

TRAILS AND HABITAT

Trails and Water Crossings Overview

- Maintained all trails in accordance with the recreation plan. Added bog bridging to protect wet areas. Over 400ft of bog bridges built in 2020.
- Established the Orange Trail and the entrance at George Danskin Way.
- Established the Purple trail, connecting the Red and Green trails and providing an alternate crossing between the east and west sides. Created an additional crossing over Tributary 13.
- Established the Pink Trail, to provide safe access for Woodland Pond residents entering the Preserve. This trail involved major erosion control, with the installation of twelve, ten-foot bog bridges.
- Explored a potential Pink-Yellow trail connection. Monitored wildlife with trail cameras to determine potential human impacts.
- Explored trail to Hummel and entrance with environmental engineer, Ted Nitza. Identified potential need for a trail easement.
- Pursued dialog with a landowner regarding a trail entrance at Harrington.

Volunteer Work, Heavy Duty: Bog Bridges

- Trained trail crew volunteers continued to provide assistance with carrying lumber, building bog bridges, etc.
- Coordinated with SUNY Geology club to remove approximately 1,000 pounds of metal trash near George Danskin Way.

Volunteer Work, Light Duty: Trail Clearing

- **Launched Trail Steward program:** ED recruited and trained volunteers. Created a formal orientation document. Stewards adopt a trail for a month or more. The stewards walk their trail, on average, once a week cutting back vegetation as needed and looking for hazards including hanging trees, wasp nests, fire rings, campers, etc.
- Added fall raking to maintenance.
- **Learning Circles:** A group of girl scouts volunteered their time to clear/rake an area to help establish a learning circle.

Signage

- Received commitment from Bruderhoff community for the donation of 3 large entrance signs. An Eagle scout will be working with MBPI on the design, build, and installation in 2021.
- Added 20 signs throughout Preserve indicating boundaries and important rules to follow: no fires, no bikes, dogs on leash. (Pictorial representations of rules for non-English speakers.)

Wildlife Monitoring

- Beaver activity monitored. Girdled and partially girdled trees noted on east side of Preserve. Monitoring of trees is ongoing. We are considering wrapping the remaining large oaks to protect them. Beaver activity has also increased at yellow/green trail crossing. Monitoring continues to determine whether this crossing should be closed. Beavers established a new dam right above stream crossing.
- Camera traps monitored a potential fisher nesting tree. Captured many videos and photos of fisher and other animals including fox, raccoon, and pileated woodpecker.
- Significant and sudden increase in visitorship due to Covid lockdown did not appear to have an adverse impact on animals. There were new sightings: river otter, long tailed weasel, green herons, a new turtle that is a NYS species of greatest conservation need, and others.
- SUNY bluebird box study provided data regarding use by birds. A variety of birds nested in boxes.

Invasive management

- Three large Japanese barberry bushes were taken down in open area where Yellow and Green share the trail.
- Targeted reduction of invasive shrubs continued, mainly honeysuckle, barberry, bittersweet, multiflora rose, Russian olive, and burning bush. Careful attention paid to avoiding large reductions in any one area.
- A dramatic increase in the amount of Oriental Bittersweet on West side of Woodland Pond's land was noted. We shared this information with Woodland Pond and volunteered to help with removal.

Hazard monitoring/reduction

- Hazardous tree evaluation and removal
- Fire ring removal
- Post-storm replacement of bog bridges, cut up/removal of trees across trail
- Removal of old garbage including rusting metal and broken glass
- Called upon police to aid enforcement of no camping and no fires (one time each).

PARKING

Initial Exploration

- **Hummel:** Potential access points/parking explored.
- **Sunset Ridge/ North Manheim/ Harrington:** initial exploration was completed in these locations in 2019. We continued to assess the best options for parking around the Preserve and the logistics required for fruition.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

- **Woodland Pond:** Numerous Woodland Pond residents volunteered to be trail stewards. The community did not allow visitors during the pandemic so our regular meetings with their committee were suspended. Our ED has remained in communication with the President of Woodland Pond via phone regarding issues of safety during the Pandemic.
- **Programming:** Because of Covid, programming was stopped. One Wildlife Tracking program ran in early 2020.
- **Survey:** Received over 60 responses from community members. Gained important feedback regarding trails and user experience.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- **Learning Circles:** Created a circle of stumps, six feet apart to accommodate small groups of kids for outdoor education. Identified up to four more locations for circles.
- **Early Education Programing:** Due to the pandemic our early education outreach program was limited in 2020. However, the ED was able to lead a few walks with Duzine classes, as well as a walk with a class of SUNY Grad Education students to discuss using forest setting as an outdoor classroom.
- **Continued Research:**
 - Kara Belinsky - SUNY Ecologist - Blue Bird Study (60 boxes) now in second year of monitoring forest-nesting cavity dwellers in the Preserve.
 - Hope Nitza - NPHS student – Completed three year study: *The Effect of Land Development on Stream Ecosystem Health in the Mill Brook Preserve, New Paltz, NY*. Advisors, Martha Cheo (WAVE educator) and Neil Bettez. Assistance from Jen Epstein (River Keeper) and Justin Seweryn/NPHS Science Research Program.

Priorities Identified for 2021

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Continue to identify and bring on new active board members. Focus on board diversity, with ties to different parts of the community and varying expertise.

CONTRACTS

- Write and submit Rec Plan Amendment 2. Proposed projects include: additional trails and entrances, shifting trails to better accommodate changes in wildlife activity, an observation platform, and benches.

FUNDRAISING

- **Legacy Campaign/Planned Giving:** Seek 40+ bequest pledges and continue to build the Legacy Fund.
- **Conservation Society:** Launch new campaign, minimum \$500 donation with a three year commitment, with recognition in our annual report. Invite to backyard wine and cheese event.
- **Business Sponsorships:** Engage local business in return for recognition through social media.
- **Match Campaign:** Match campaign for observation platform (\$5000 initial pledge has been offered).
- **Online appeals:** 1) bog bridge fund, 2) trail crew equipment fund
- **Community Liaisons:** identify representatives within the surrounding neighborhoods, willing to disseminate information via email lists, door to door and neighborhood fundraising campaigning.
- Continue to actively search for more grant money.
- Continue to foster personal relationships with our most dedicated users/donors.
- Host some backyard wine and cheese events (if possible).
- Look for opportunities for press releases.

TRAILS AND HABITAT

Trails and General Improvements (see Attachment 1)

- Replace laminated trail maps with maps printed on weatherproof composite board
- Begin process for an observation deck at beaver pond (completion time dependent on permissions, fundraising, and build time).
- Install bike racks at all entrances.
- Build and install benches in some key locations.
- Establish trail to Hummel.

- Establish and advertise exercise loop trail, which would involve making a few extra trail connections and incorporating hills.
- Add needed bog bridges and stream crossings.
- Explore trail from Old Mill Rd.
- Move trails downstream away from beaver activity (Yellow/green).
- Continue to engage community to help wildlife monitoring and invasive species removal.

Bridges

- Two bridges may be built by the village through the CFA grant. One crosses Tributary 13, near N Manheim and another is near Sunset Ridge. These bridges will replace the current temporary crossing and make passage much safer.

PARKING

- **Sunset Ridge/North Manheim:** Look into improving the parking space with minimal construction
- **Harrington/Hummel/Moriello Pool lot:** Continue to explore these locations as potential entrances with parking.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

- Continue to engage the community through social media.
- Offer Zoom meet ups with members (Q & A with Exec Dir).
- Offer walks to Woodland Pond residents when safe to do so.
- Reestablish hiking buddies when safe to do so.
- Continue involving community through volunteer opportunities that individuals or members of the same pod can do safely.
- Look to partner with organizations that offer outdoor experiences to diverse populations.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- Create more learning circles within the preserve. Advertise to various education groups.
- Facilitate school groups and home school groups using the Preserve as an outdoor classroom.
- Facilitate research opportunities.
- Offer educational programming, and citizen science when safe to do so.
- Invasive species management: Partner with PRISM (Lower Hudson Valley Region). Map our invasive plants and develop a plan for reduction and restoration of native understory.

ATTACHEMENT 1: Trail Map

