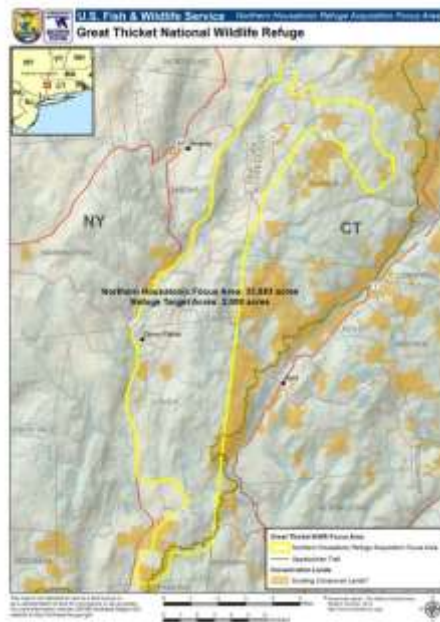


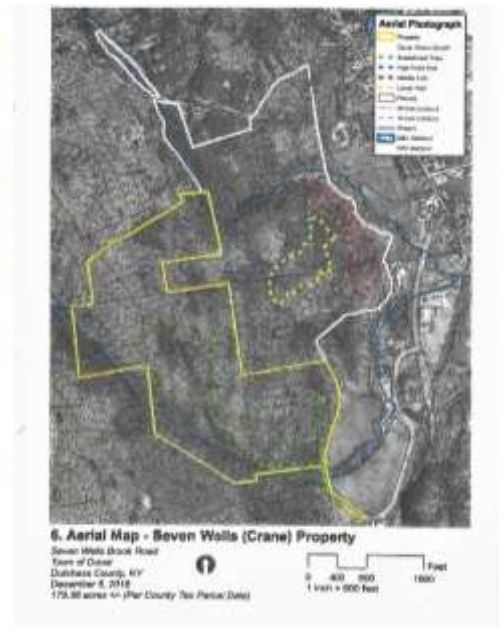
Town of Dover Climate Smart Communities PE7 Action: Conservation of Three Significant Natural Habitats



Acquisition and Development of the Dover Stone Church Park and Preserve



Transfer of Nellie Hill Preservation to Establish the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge



Acquisition and Conservation of the Seven Wells (Crane) Property Addition to Dover Stone Church Park and Preserve

Background and Context

While this Pledge Element Action is among many actions we have completed to demonstrate and document our dedication to reducing the negative and potential irreparable impacts of our human activity on climate change, we consider this action as the capstone and legacy to our children’s children and all future generations of those who will come to call the Town of Dover “home.”

Through much of the Town’s settled history, its resilient ecosystem was exploited for its lucrative natural resources- iron ore, limestone and marble quarrying in the Federalist Period and through the 1800’s as a drovers’ and railroad transportation corridor and respite for livestock and commodities traveling south to New York City. By the mid 1990’s, the insatiable economy for road infrastructure materials resulted in numerous sand and gravel mining operations acquiring land and overharvesting key areas of Dover’s valley bottom including borders of ecologically sensitive areas with limited to cursory reclamation.

In the Summary and Implications for Planning section of the 1993 Town of Dover Master Plan, the authors wrote,

“Preservation cannot be a passive affair. Unless the Town enacts protection

measures, the development pressures which are evident in Dover and surrounding communities threaten to irreparably alter the historic and scenic character of the town.” (Town of Dover Master Plan, 1993,p. 23).

In hindsight, as mining operators in Dover were gearing down and searching for new sand and gravel tracts, new land use developers were purchasing mined parcels to establish construction and demolition debris and solid waste landfills. Other industrial development during this decade ensued that included a tire recycling plant on the site of a former government-operated magnesium processing plant. On New Year’s Day 1996, a fire consumed the plant that took 250 firefighters and a week to extinguish and to date, is considered the largest fire ever in Dutchess County. It appears the realization that a “passive” approach to preservation could indeed irreparably alter Dover’s scenic character (as cited in the Town’s Master Plan) was the touchstone for a critical mass of Dover residents to form a grassroots organization, “DRUMS” (Dover Resident United Means Strength) to insist that local officials enact legislation to better protect Dover’s natural environment.

In 1999 the Dover Town Board adopted two amendments to the Town’s Master Plan: 1) to prohibit all new mining operations but to grandfather current permitted mines by adopting a soil mining overlay district and 2) disallow solid waste management facilities with the exception of municipally-operated and owned facilities. In the Town of Dover’s *1999 Master Plan Amendments*’ discussion, the Town Board provided the following arguments as the basis for legislation:

“Mining and quarrying have occurred in many locations throughout the Town, primarily in the valley bottom area. Many mines have not been effectively managed or reclaimed...This new direction is worrisome to the Town Board as it seeks to protect the Town’s special character as it seeks to protect the Town’s special characters as a scenic and rural community that is attractive to families, businesses and clean industry.” (Town of Dover Master Plan Amendments, April 28, 1999, p. 1).

“Solid waste management facilities are a form of industrial development that the Town does not wish to encourage. Such facilities have proven to be environmentally unsafe with catastrophic potentials (such as the Polytech fire in January 1996). Dover is the first town north of the area regulated by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection for watershed protection...Dover has learned from first-hand experience that it cannot count on proper operation to occur. Its citizens deserve to be protected from the risks of accidents and inadequate facility management.” (Town of Dover Master Plan Amendments, April 28, 1999, pp. 2-3).

In 2000, community organizers who successfully advocated for municipal legislation to actively protect Dover’s natural resources were elected to the Dover Town Board. The presence of new town leadership with a frame of reference to proactively seek opportunities to protect Dover’s ecology and natural environment helped facilitate the initial paradigm shift that has continued and galvanized our efforts even to this da.

The Town of Dover’s conservation of three significant natural habitats in the hamlet of Dover Plains have been accomplished (and in the last case, is underway) with the support of partnerships with residents (taxpayers and the Friends of Dover Stone Church), municipal

departments and committees (CAC and Town Recreation Department), the non-profit land conservancy (Dutchess Land Conservancy), Dutchess County government, environmental organizations (Hudsonia, Ltd. and Housatonic Valley Association, Inc.), NYS (Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation) and town officials. A brief narrative of the implementation of each natural area conserved will be discussed in more detail with attachments of relevant documents to support its value for natural habitat connectivity and resilience under climate change.

The 1993 Town Master Plan recommended in multiple sections of goals for Land Use and Population and Economic Base to identify and protect scenic resources, wildlife habitats, rare and endangered plant communities, significant environmental areas and groundwaters (please see attachment, “Dover Stone Church and Seven Wells Conservation References in 1993 Town Master Plan and 2019 Natural Resource Inventory”) Specific sites mentioned in the plan included both the Dover Stone Church and Seven Wells parcels.”

Specific Sites.

- a. Complete the work to nominate White's and Sharparoon Furnaces to the National Historic Register. Work with landowners to develop buffer areas around the sites and hire professional archeologists to study the sites and their surroundings. Designate the sites as local historic landmarks and implement accompanying regulations for their long-term protection.
- b. Work with landowners to obtain easements and limited public access for the Seven Wells and Stone Church sites.

Other Open Space Techniques

A variety of innovative techniques could be used to help Dover retain its crucial rural character through selective open space protection. Outright public acquisition, the purchase of development rights, or the negotiation of conservation easements on key parcels are among the most direct ways to protect important properties. Conservation easements are generally voluntary agreements filed with the deed for permanent protection that still maintain private ownership of the land. Deductions on state and federal taxes for any charitable donation or reduced property taxes are sometimes available as incentives to landowners, depending on the particulars of the property. Such easements are often proposed in conjunction with cluster or limited development projects.

Copies of the Town of Dover 1993 Master Plan sections on “Specific Sites” (for conservation) and “Other Open Space Techniques” (pp. 117 and 129).

The next sections will discuss the Town’s acquisition and establishment of the Dover Stone Church (and adjacent parcels for conservation easement and public recreation) and the current efforts underway to acquire the Seven Wells (Crane) property, both in Dover Plains.

The third initiative, transfer of the conservation easement on the Nellie Hill Preserve to help establish of the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge will be discussed in the last section.

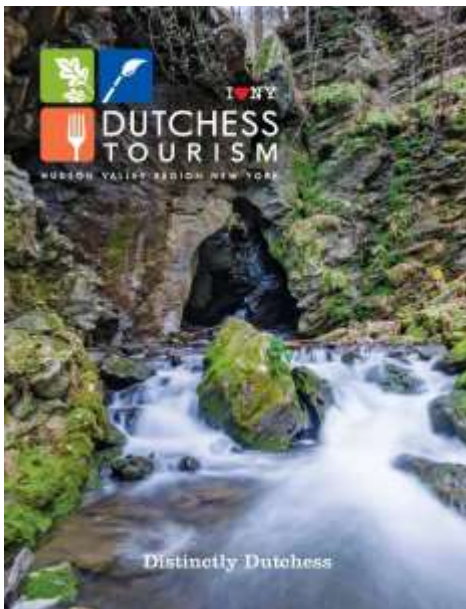
1) Acquisition and Establishment of the Dover Stone Church Park and Preserve

As early as 1835, the “Stone Church” was popularized as a “singular and interesting curiosity” by “Family Magazine,” sketched and painted by Asher Durand of the Hudson River School of Art and immortalized in sketches and a booklet renowned historical author and editor, Benson Lossing in 1876. Since Dover’s founding in 1807, the property was privately owned but was nevertheless, visited as a natural attraction by area residents and NYC dwellers who pilgrimaged by rail seeking a day’s respite from urban living.



View looking out from inside the Dover Stone Church cavern

In 2001, a private landowner approached the Town with interest in the sale of the 58-parcel that including the Stone Church cavern in the hamlet of Dover Plains. The landmark called “the Stone Church,” is a prodigious cavern of metamorphic rocks that includes an interior waterfall situated on the Stone Church Brook, a tributary of the Ten Mile River. The name, “Stone Church” is speculated to describe the resemblance of the outline of two metamorphic rocks at the cave’s entrance to an arched gothic stained-glass window.



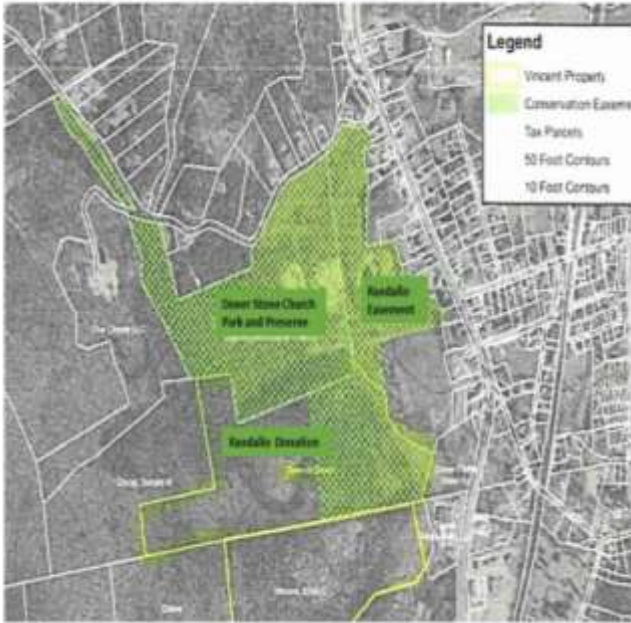
The Dover Plains hamlet has a private water system serving approximately 1000 households with its wellhead is located on the Stone Church Brook. Acquisition and conservation of the Dover Stone Church parcel has not only protected the pristine water quality and supply of hamlet residents (and those beyond the hamlet that have private wells), it has also protected significant indigenous animals, flora and fauna habitats according to studies by Hudsonia, Ltd.

With funding assistance from the Dutchess Land Conservancy, the Friends of Dover Stone Church and a grant from the Dutchess County Open Space and Farmland Protection Program, purchased the parcel and conveyed a permanent conservation easement in August 2004.

Adjacent Parcels Secured with Additional Conservation Easements

In 2009, an adjacent parcel owner donated a conservation easement on an additional 50-acre parcel and subsequently donated another 63 acres-in-fee along the lands at the southern border of the hamlet expanding the preserve to 171 acres in 2010.

These two easements were instrumental in providing additional protection to the Dover Plains water supply and as a grant match source for a NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation grant for \$130,000 to the Town restore the Preserve's historic tree-lined right-of-way from Route 22, granite steps along the ingress and egress of the right-of way and install a new footbridge at the Stone Church Brook.



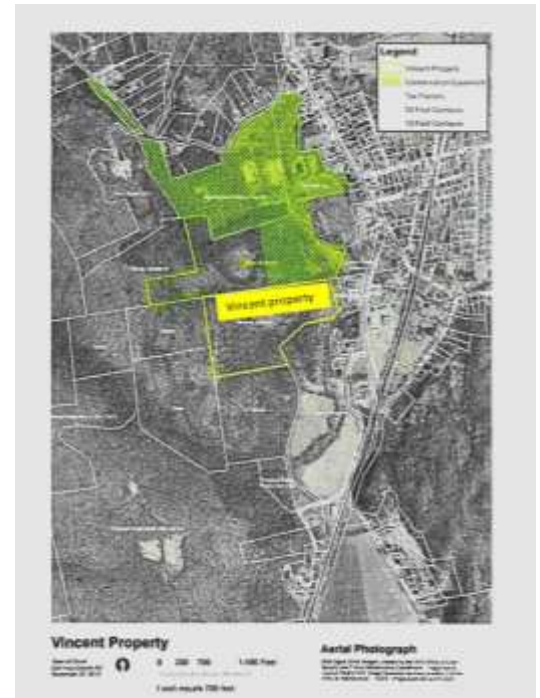
Dover Stone Church Preserve Lane
Route 22, Dover Plains



2010 seasonal photographs of the maple trees planted to restore the maple tree-lined right-of-way, granite steps and a newly built footbridge over the Stone Church Brook.



Acquisition of the “Vincent” Property and Creation of Three Miles of Nature Trails



In 2014, the Town purchased another adjacent 52-acre parcel owner from the Vincent family with funding support of Dutchess Land Conservancy and blazed three miles of nature trails that were opened for public recreation in 2015.



Please be mindful of this delicate area during your visit. The trails have been designed to protect these sensitive habitats. Please help us protect the ecology by staying on the marked trails.

The preservation of the open space, natural beauty and ecology of this historic property was made possible due to the collaborative efforts of:

- Town of Dover
- Dutchess Land Conservancy
- Friends of Dover Stone Church
- Dutchess County
- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Environmental Protection Fund.

Trails constructed and maintained by:

- Town of Dover
- Friends of Dover Stone Church
- Harlem Valley Trails Crew
- New York New Jersey Trail Conference

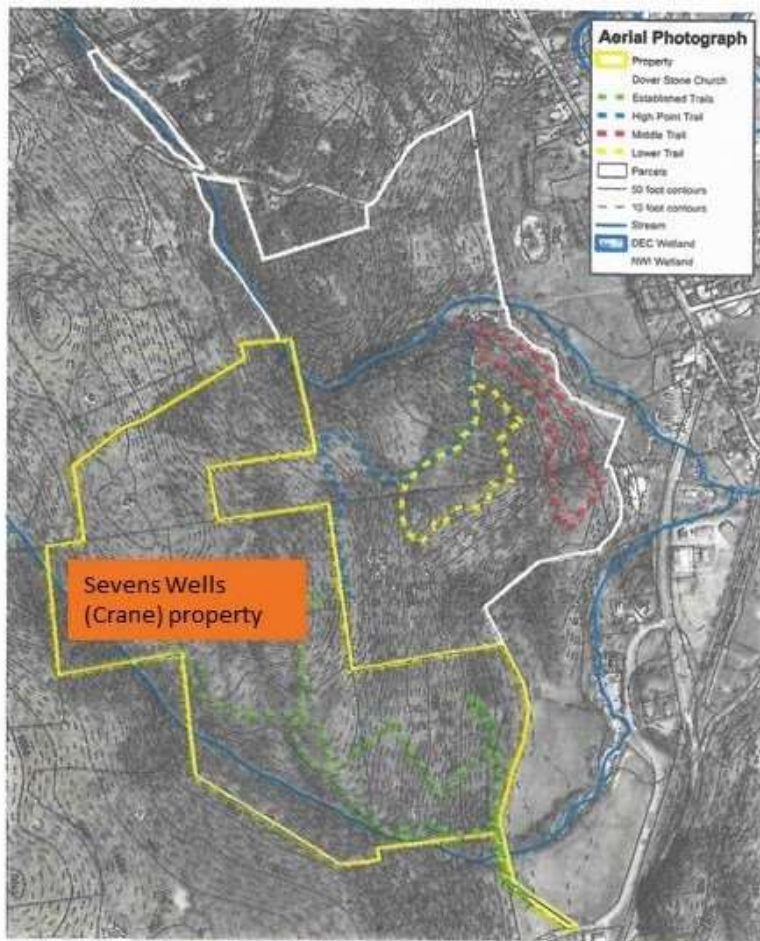
2) Current Efforts Underway to Acquire the Seven Wells (Crane) Property

For the past century, the 170-acre Seven Wells property has been owned by the Crane family of Dover Plains. Along with the Dover Stone Church, this parcel is listed on the NYS Open Space Plan, the Town's 1993 Master Plan and the 2019 Town Natural Resource Inventory as an exceptional natural resource suited for formal protection.

Acquisition of the Seven Wells property would double the size of the current Dover Stone Church Park and Preserve (to approximately 342 acres) and further protects the aquifer recharge zones of Seven Wells and Stone Church Brooks that support the quality of the Dover Plains water supply and Ten Mile River watershed that extends into Connecticut and drains into the Housatonic River and into its terminus at the Long Island Sound.



1906 Postcard of "The Seven Wells, Dover Plains, NY"



6. Aerial Map - Seven Wells (Crane) Property

Seven Wells Brook Road
Town of Dover
Dutchess County, NY
December 5, 2018
179.86 acres +/- (Per County Tax Parcel Data)



0 400 800 1600 Feet
1 inch = 800 feet

With assistance of the Dutchess Land Conservancy and the Dutchess County's Partnership for Manageable Growth (PMG) Open Space and Farmland Protection Program, the Town has applied for a grant to acquire the Seven Wells property for permanent conservation.

The PMG Program will provide 50% of the approximately \$1,000,000 purchase cost of the parcel along with funds allocated by the Town of Dover and private funds donated to the Dutchess Land Conservancy.

An application for funding assistance has been submitted by the Town and notifications are anticipated in the spring of 2020.

The Seven Wells parcel is adjacent to the Town's third conservation initiative, easement transfer of the Nellie Hill Preserve to help establish the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge. A description of that project follows.

3) Conservation Easement Transfer of the Nature Conservancy's Nellie Hill Preserve to Help Establish The Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge

In October 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was approved to establish a new 15,000-acre refuge across six northeast states named “the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge.” The Town of Dover lies in the National Housatonic Refuge Acquisition Focus Areas (RAFAs) and includes lands to the east of Route 22, a state transportation arterial that bisects the Town of Dover. Since the Dover Stone Church Park and Preserve and Seven Wells properties are situated on the west side of Route 22, they are not considered within the Great Thicket refuge.

The 144-acre Nellie Hill Preserve was transferred to the Nature Conservancy in 1992 by the Benson family of Dover Plains and augments Nature Conservancy's Roger Perry Preserve known for its eroded limestone ridges and bedrock outcroppings crested by cottonwood trees.



In January 2017, the Dover Town Board approved the termination of the Nature Conservancy's conservation easement to allow its transfer as the first parcel of The Great Thicket Refuge. According to Wendi Weber, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Northeast Region, “This is the largest conservation effort in the nation.” (Poughkeepsie Journal (2017. “Dover parcel 1st in 6-state wildlife refuge.” January 19, 2017 edition, Poughkeepsie, NY.

The Town of Dover's commitment to the conservation of natural habitats has secured the protection of numerous endangered and threatened animal and plant species and the natural resources for town residents to enjoy and sustain the resilient Dover ecosystem for generations to come. We will continue to seek new opportunities wherever possible to expand the conservation of natural habitats for future generations to inherit a “Town of Dover” as pristine as possible to leave as our legacy.