



CATSKILLCENTER

SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER

The Catskill Center will celebrate many successes during 2014. Our community is more organized in its advocacy for the Catskill Park, we are embarking on a major project to save the region's Hemlocks, the Interpretive Center will be built this year and we will start a new partnership with New York City to protect the streams in the watershed. This week we celebrated the addition of the summit of Balsam Mountain to the Forest Preserve. This addition completes a series of land protection projects totaling 2,000 acres. With a backdrop of permanently protected lands, public recreation will thrive throughout the Catskill Region for generations to come.

CONSERVATION
CREATES
OPPORTUNITY



for so long. Stay tuned for a ground breaking ceremony this summer. For the past twenty years I have watched our majestic hemlocks decline as a result of an invasive insect. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid has proven deadly to our most ecologically significant and charismatic tree. This spring we have devoted a small area of our new Thorn Preserve in Woodstock to the production of a beetle that will help the hemlocks in the Catskill Mountains survive this attack. The first stage of this ten year project, planting a “hemlock orchard” was completed by our dedicated team in May.



Catskill Interpretive Center Design

Accomplishments

of this magnitude are only possible with strong partnerships. One of the objectives of our new Catskill Park Coalition will be to identify and receive priority status for critical additions to our Catskill Park. More than 25 groups were represented this year when we spent a day in Albany to advocate for resources for the Forest Preserve. We are proving that working together as a community and focusing on our common interests gets results in Albany. From my perspective New York State has not rebuilt the Department of Environmental Conservation sufficiently since the budget reductions of the last decade.

The future success of our economy in the Catskills is dependent on a well funded Forest Preserve, timely environmental reviews, and promotion of the recreational opportunities provided by our region’s public lands and waters. Construction of the Catskill Interpretive Center will begin this summer after more than 30 years. This first stage of construction will feature a visitors center with a focus on promoting all our region has to offer. In addition to the initial building, plans are underway for a fire tower, a sculpture garden, native landscaping, several interpretive trails, a pavilion and an amphitheater. Many thanks to all the volunteers that have maintained the vision for this project

From my perspective our mountain streams are one of most sensitive and valuable resources. Developing new tools to protect them is a great project for the Catskill Center. Preventing additional development in flood plains will also help our communities avoid future flood impacts.

-Alan White
Executive Director

THE LAST STAND SAVING THE CATSKILLS' HEMLOCK

Molly Marquan - CRISP Coordinator



If there's a single tree that characterizes the Catskills, it's the hemlock. Colonizing the region's northern slopes, precipitous ravines, and high elevation ridge lines, it protects and stabilizes some of the Catskills' most breathtaking landscapes, and fragile habitat. The target of nineteenth century tanneries, the tree has an important place in Catskills history too. Despite enormous losses due to logging, the hemlock remains the region's 3rd most numerous tree species, second only to red and sugar maple. However, a new threat has emerged on the horizon: almost invisible to the naked eye, hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) threatens to decimate our hemlock forests, and change the landscape of the Catskills, forever. Measuring barely 1mm in length, the hemlock woolly adelgid's size belies the damage it is capable of inflicting. An Asian relative of the aphid, HWA inserts its sucking mouth parts at the base of the hemlock's needles, on the underside of the tree's branch. The insect's feeding causes scarification of the tissues essential for water and nutrient transport within the tree- on a large scale, millions of nymphs preying on a single tree can cause death within ten years. Although the Catskills' frigid winters have slowed

the growth and spread of the HWA population, cold tolerance is already being observed at some of the region's more northern infestations. In warmer locations closer to the original introduction point of HWA in Virginia, some forests have already lost 90% of their hemlocks. Although low density infestations are incredibly hard to detect, trees in the height of the infestation cycle are so laden with white egg sacs, they appear to be dusted with snow. It doesn't take long for an initial introduction of HWA to expand to widespread proportions. Like all invasive species, HWA reproduces blindingly fast. A single female (and all HWA are female- they reproduce by a process known as parthenogenesis) can produce up to 40,000 eggs in one year. Often times, infested trees will enter what's colloquially known as a 'boom and bust' cycle. HWA populations surge when given plenty of food, but, as the tree begins to die, there is less and less for HWA to feed on. Consequentially, the population of HWA begins to die off. Just as the tree begins to rebound, HWA comes back with a final, and definitive blow. In the Catskills, infested trees have a lifespan of 8-15 years.

