

**Elizabeth Reichheld**  
**PO Box 187**  
**Lake Hill, NY 12448**  
**845-679-1243**  
**845-340-7838**  
**ereichheld@aol.com**

March 25, 2010

Jeff Moran  
Supervisor  
Town of Woodstock  
Woodstock, NY 12498

Dear Jeff,

Almost a year ago, at the request of the Comeau Trails Task Force Chair, I walked the Comeau trail network and along the Saw Kill to evaluate the woody debris jams and streambank erosion with an eye towards their potential impact on the Comeau Trails. I did my evaluation at low flows and in relatively dry weather. As you know, I serve as the Program Director for the Stream Management Program at the NYCDEP and many of Woodstock's stream-related challenges are the same as those experienced in the New York City Watershed. I am writing you today regarding the existing soccer field drainage's impact on the Comeau's riparian buffer.

Given my previous involvement with the Task Force and the recent proposals for new or expanded uses, I was asked by my friend Pat Jackson to look at the drainage from the soccer fields under spring wet conditions. I visited the fields on March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and was able to trace the drainage primarily to the "place of the pallets." What I saw concerns me.

As you know, the soccer fields were built on top of a wet meadow and are drained by perforated pipes into the adjacent forest. The shallow soils here easily become saturated and the drainage slowly makes its way to the trail at "the place of the pallets" and over the streambank, which sits high above the Saw Kill. Here, one observes the land near the stream breaking away in large pieces. There is a convergence of damaging forces here: the trail which compacts and destabilizes the soil; the runoff and subsurface drainage from the soccer fields; and, the Saw Kill's natural and sometime erosive flows at the bottom of the high streambank.

Typically, erosion caused by hillslope geotechnical problems, like poor drainage, cause trees to lean back toward the land. It is an occurrence seen throughout much of the Catskills, which are rife with geotechnical hillslope failures related to poor soil drainage -- a result of our glacial geology. At the Comeau, where drainage from the soccer fields converges with the "place of the pallets," the trees, many of them mature, lean toward the land.

This observation is shared not to point fingers at any single activity but to point out the need to resolve drainage issues at the Comeau before any future development, be it the moving of trails, the expansion of athletic fields, or the building of new structures. The natural soils at the Comeau are limited in their capacity to store displaced water, and current drainage of the area should be addressed to stabilize the network of trails and curtail erosion of the Saw Kill's banks, and adding additional drainage water to this area should be avoided. Furthermore, downstream from the convergence there is the large woody debris jam at what is known as Stone Beach. This area should be evaluated to ensure the flow of the Saw Kill is not being deflected into the bank, exacerbating the undercutting of the bank and compounding the problems association with poor drainage from the soccer fields.

I would be happy to walk this area or speak by phone at your convenience and participate in planning for solutions.

Sincerely,



Beth Reichheld

cc: David Corbett  
Chair  
Comeau Trails Task Force

Paul Shultis, Jr.  
Chair  
Planning Board

Kevin Smith  
Director  
Woodstock Land Conservancy