



## “In wildness is the preservation of the world.”

—Henry David Thoreau

December 2006

### WOODSTOCK LAND CONSERVANCY

Dear Friend:

One of the great environmental success stories of recent decades is how more than 1,500 land trusts across the country have saved nearly 10 million acres of land from development — keeping wildness alive wherever we turn, from forests and fields to mountains and rivers. At the same time, countless landowners now enjoy financial benefits and peace of mind, knowing that the places they love will be protected forever. The Woodstock Land Conservancy is proud to be part of this ever-growing land conservation movement.

**Yet the urgency of our mission has never been greater.** Nationwide, more than 4 million acres are lost to development each year, and the Woodstock area is not immune to this trend. For example, about 20 new single family homes have been built annually in Woodstock in recent years. Perhaps you’ve noticed the sudden appearance of survey flags, a chain across a trail, new driveways, or houses in those special places you’ve walked, biked, or driven by. While some development is necessary and even welcome, we know there are certain places that, if developed, would change the character of the Woodstock area forever. It is these special lands that WLC is committed to protecting.

**We need you to become involved so that we can meet the challenges ahead together.** As development pressures mount, we must continually step up our efforts to preserve the best of Woodstock for generations to come. And as property values rise, so do the costs of fulfilling our mission. In this letter, we want to share the exciting changes we have implemented last year, and the successes our supporters have made possible.

#### ***Organizational improvement***

On January 1, John Winter was named our new Executive Director. John has infused the organization with new ideas, abundant energy, and a spirit of professionalism. He has helped us reorganize our all-volunteer Board into committees to improve our effectiveness and broaden support. We’ve also enlisted local professionals who are generously donating their time and expertise to help us enhance our communications, fundraising, and technical capacities.

#### ***Land protection***

We are very close to achieving our goal of **doubling the size of the State-owned Overlook Wild Forest** on the summit of Overlook Mountain, thanks to the financial support of our donors and the hard work of the Open Space Institute. In addition to the 403 acres conserved last year through the “Save Overlook” campaign, we are about to add 186 acres on California Quarry Road, and are reaching out to other landowners in this visible and historically significant part of the Catskills. We’re also working to protect land (in addition to the 50 acres we already own) on Overlook’s sister Mount Guardian, with its pristine ridgeline facing Woodstock.

#### **Directors**

Jim Bogner  
Michael DeWan  
Rosalind Dickinson  
Sabine Hrechdakian  
Peter Koch  
Elizabeth Lesser  
David Marell  
Will Nixon  
Susan Robinson  
Kevin Smith  
Nadia Steinzor

Gay Leonhardt  
*President Emeritus*

John Winter  
*Executive Director*

PO Box 864 ♦ Woodstock, NY 12498 ♦ 845-334-2418

[www.woodstocklandconservancy.org](http://www.woodstocklandconservancy.org) ♦ [info@woodstocklandconservancy.org](mailto:info@woodstocklandconservancy.org)

Across the Woodstock area, we've been working with property owners interested in leaving a legacy of land, such as a recently acquired seven-acre streamside tract on the Sawkill in Bearsville and the donation of a 14-acre easement high up on Overlook. In order to increase the pace and effectiveness of our conservation efforts, we've just completed a comprehensive inventory of lands with important ecological or cultural features. This critical tool— *along with your financial support*— will enable us to be more proactive and strategic in protecting these places before they are lost forever.

### ***Stewardship of existing properties***

In 2006, we put systems in place to regularly monitor activities on properties with existing easements. As a result, our easement donors have become more engaged in our work — reminding us just how committed landowners in the community are to conservation.

In the spring, we will open one of our properties to the public for the first time. Sloan Gorge Preserve — a stunning 88-acre parcel at the base of Overlook Mountain with geologically significant rock formations, vernal pools, and two bluestone quarries — was given to us by Woodstock artist Allan Edward Sloan. You'll find a plaque commemorating his generosity along a trail in the gorge, and a map and descriptions of the area's history and ecology on a trailhead kiosk. We also plan to open to the public a 36-acre parcel on Yerry Hill known locally as "Snake Rocks," with stunning cliffside views of the Wittenberg Valley.

### ***Communications and outreach***

We are currently redesigning the Conservancy web site, creating strategic partnerships with other organizations, and expanding outreach to potential new supporters. Enclosed is our brand-new brochure about our work and history, "Safeguarding Our Natural Legacy." Another brochure for prospective land donors, "Making Conservation Work: Options and Benefits for Landowners," explains conservation easements, land donations and other tools. Please contact us to obtain copies of either of these brochures.

Finally, we've purchased a fundraising database system that enables us to send targeted mailings (like this one) and communicate with our donors more effectively. We want to stay in touch with you to hear about your interests and concerns, invite you to special events, and encourage you to become more involved. Be sure to indicate your interests and availability to volunteer on our reply envelope.

This is an exciting time for the Conservancy and we feel confident and well-prepared to face the challenges ahead. **But we cannot do it without you because we depend entirely on your generosity for our success.** Please make as large a contribution (tax-deductible, of course) as you can. For your convenience, we've included a reply envelope, and we accept credit cards. Please feel free to contact us with any questions and suggestions. **We want to hear from you!**

On behalf of John Winter and the Board of Directors, I thank you for your support of our vital work, and wish you a happy and peaceful holiday season.

Warmly,

Michael DeWan  
*President*