

## Local concerns include water, land use



*View of Poughkeepsie from the Walkway Over the Hudson. / Photo courtesy of Vicky Kelly*

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*The Dutchess County Environmental Management Council recently completed a State of the Environment report for the county. This is the first in a series of articles from the report. The entire report can be found online at*

<http://dutchessemc.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/dcsoereport2012.pdf>.

The Environmental Management Council is charged with the task of writing a State of the Environment report, which was last completed in 1982. While conditions have improved since 1982 (better air and water quality, reduced acid rain, increased forest cover, better emissions controls on motor vehicles and smokestacks), some environmental issues remain a concern.

We surveyed newspaper articles about the environment as well as forums presented by our local cooperative extension and found that the issues of most concern to residents of Dutchess County include water, air pollution, climate change, land preservation, Lyme disease, invasive species, waste management and Superfund sites.

The 2012 State of the Environment report is a summary of these and other issues and challenges that the county faces now and in the coming years. Several themes are common throughout the report.

Water, one of our most important resources, connects us in ways that cross political boundaries. Groundwater is connected to above-ground water (ponds, lakes, wetlands and streams) so preserving the quality of streams, lakes and ponds also ensures protection of our groundwater and vice versa.

Knowing how to properly dispose of industrial and residential waste and improving our recycling rate will help us protect our groundwater and surface water supplies.

Secondly, what happens in upstream communities affects downstream communities. Minimization of impervious surfaces in upstream communities will protect downstream communities from devastating floods, which will increase in frequency as our climate changes.

Proper land management is another common theme in our report. Protection of large tracts of undisturbed forest, our native vegetation, will help maintain a diverse biota, which will serve to reduce the risk of infectious diseases such as Lyme disease and West Nile virus as well as ensure that our plants and animals are ready to withstand the onslaught of invasive, nonnative species and the certain climate change that Dutchess County will face in the coming decades.

Land use change has altered the state of our environment in Dutchess County in profound ways. Large sections of the county have been developed in spread-out suburban patterns, affecting the quality of our air and changing the landscape forever.

Continued attention to land use planning that ensures protection of our forests will ensure that Dutchess County remains an attractive and safe place to live and prosper.

Dutchess County has rich and abundant natural resources. Protection of the land and water that make up our beautiful county will preserve its natural beauty, ensuring we continue to be a destination for people seeking a respite from the stress of everyday life.

Perhaps more importantly, protection of our land and water will ensure the continued availability of the resources that are critical for the sustainability of human habitation in Dutchess County.

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*Vicky Kelly / Courtesy photo*