

Town Topics

New Rondout Valley Coalition

Officials of the six municipalities in the **Rondout Valley** have formed a cooperative partnership.

Called the **Rondout Valley Corridor Coalition**, the collaboration involves representatives of the Ulster County towns of Hurley, Marbletown, Rochester, Rosendale, Wawarsing, and the village of Ellenville.

These adjoining communities make up the Valley between the **Shawangunk Mountains** and the **Catskill Mountains** and lie along the historic **US Rte. 209** corridor or, as with Rosendale, are linked to it via NY Rte. 213.

Coalition members are Hurley Highway Superintendent Linda Cook, Marbletown Supervisor Vincent Martello, Rochester Supervisor Pamela Duke, Rosendale Supervisor Bob Gallagher, Wawarsing Supervisor James Dolaway, and Ellenville Village Manager Elliott Auerbach.

Coordinator of the group is Al Wegener, who is also Project Manager for the **Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway**, which involves all of these **Rondout Valley** communities south of Hurley as well as five communities in the Wallkill Valley.

In addition to their geographic proximity, the coalition communities share a common history that goes back thousands of years to when the **Rondout Valley** was home to Native Americans. Early settlers moving south from Kingston followed the fertile **Rondout Creek** floodplain. The **Old Mine Road**, built by the Dutch in the early 1700s, carried trade between the Delaware and the Hudson rivers, linking these corridor communities. Later, the **D&H Canal** provided transportation for the many industries that prospered in the Valley, the most notable of which was the natural cement industry. The **O&W Railroad** carried tourists into the Valley, which became part of the "borscht belt" of the southern Catskills.

Today, these communities also share certain characteristics: a rapid rate of population growth, with accompanied changes in land use, as well as the desire to provide for economic development while preserving the scenic and rural character of the Valley.

The idea of the coalition dates back to last September; James Dolaway, Pam Duke, Vin Martello, and Al Wegener happened to get together at a meeting of **Friends of Historic Rochester** at the **Rochester Reformed Church**. During refreshments, they remarked on the common heritage and present-day character of the communities in the Valley. They agreed to explore ways in which inter-municipal cooperation might be helpful.

Since then, the group has expanded and now represents all six municipalities in the Valley. It has met six times and had discussions with Russell Robbins, NYS DOT Regional Planner, Professor John Nolan and Sean Nolan of the Pace Land Use Law Center, and planning consultant Peter Fairweather.

The group has agreed that the purpose of the **Rondout Valley Corridor Coalition** will be "to facilitate cooperation between the communities in the Rondout Valley on a range of issues, problems and opportunities where a shared response would be appropriate and mutually beneficial."

One project already initiated by the five **Coalition** members along **Rte. 209** is a request to the NYS DOT and the **Ulster County Transportation Council** to consider doing a sustainable transportation and land-use study

along the 30-mile stretch of **Rte. 209** from Hurley to the Ulster County line south of Ellenville.

The group believes that a regional approach is needed in order to assess current and long-term mobility needs in a manner that considers land-use scenarios along the entire corridor. As envisioned by the coalition, the study would involve active participation by the municipalities as well as by the public in each of the communities along the corridor.

Another project being considered by the **Coalition** is to bring together local historians and representatives of the various historic resources in the Valley to explore ways in which collaboration may be beneficial. The **Rondout Valley** has exceptional historic resources, with many old stone houses, the D&H Canal Museum, the **Terwilliger House Museum**, the Snyder Estate Natural Cement Historic District, and many other historic districts, with several going back to the early 1660s.

The **Coalition** is also interested in the possibility of attracting tourism via the various arts and crafts offerings, the farm markets of the **Rondout Valley Growers' Association**, the festivals, and the recreational and sporting resources of the valley. These activities would complement tourism-related programs of the **Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway**.

The coalition also wants to explore positive steps that might be taken to preserve the rural character of the communities in the Valley, such as the preservation of open space and productive farmland, as well as the scenic views of the **Shawangunk Mountains** and the **Catskills**.

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Transfer Permits Available

The Town of Wawarsing Town Clerk's Office announces the 2005 Transfer Station Permits are on sale; the cost of the Permit is \$45 for a resident permit. You can do this by mail, by sending a check with the license plate number and the make of the vehicle to the **Town Clerk, PO Box 671, Ellenville, New York**; if you have any questions, please feel free to call the Town Clerk at 647-6560 ext. 105.

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