

# Mountain Lines

by Lucy Muller, Lu@warwick.net

☺ The *Cragsmoor Free Library* is having a fantastic Library Day on **Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>**, from **9 AM to 4 PM**. There'll be a rummage sale, country bake sale, huge book sale, face painting, and beautiful art show, as well as the popular rake-it-in-affle with a prize of \$10,000. Tickets are \$100 and there will be only 300 tickets for sale. The drawing will be on **Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup>**, at **1:30 PM** at the *Library*. For information call: **845-647-4611**.

☺ We went up to the *Sam's Point Preserve* to see the fantastic mural inside the building. I hope everyone who reads this gets a chance to see it; words can't describe how great it is.

There is also a special-effects hologram-sort-of-thing that changes views when you stand at certain spots in the room. The purpose is to show people what the area looks like when a fire or 'burn' happens, when the growth is not controlled, and when the burned area grows back. I think the object is to show people that a 'controlled burn,' one which is set on purpose, is a good thing.

When the blueberry pickers lived up there, they are said to have burned some of the underbrush to help the bushes come back stronger; other fires started from lightning. The berry pickers burned small areas, which is what the experts will probably do, but there wasn't anywhere near as much debris 50 years ago. In the past 30 years, the undergrowth and trees have grown up without a fire and there is a lot of very flammable stuff building up.

I know someone who fought fires up there in the 1950s. "I remember when they used to get us out of school and pay 25 cents an hour for helping fight fires on the mountain," he said. "I think it's too late to try to burn up there safely. It should have been done way before this." And as far as Indians setting fires... why would they? How would they put them out? Wouldn't that have been too risky? If lightning hasn't struck the top of the mountain, then I guess that's the natural turn of events. I wonder if cleaning up the ground with crews of people, who need work, would make it safer? My other great concern is for the animals. They haven't experienced a fire for all that time either. Where would they go? Ellenville? Gardiner? There used to be seven fire towers in our area up there so that one could see if a fire started or where it was headed. Will they use airplanes now to keep track of it? (Someone will say that I am too negative, but I don't believe in the Titanic-mind-set that thinks nothing can go wrong. I look forward to learning more.)

Luckily, I will get a chance to ask all these questions on August 28<sup>th</sup>. The *Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership* is going to give five talks on the reasons for fire in the type of environment on **Sam's Point**. On **Sunday, August 28<sup>th</sup>** from **9:30 AM to 12 Noon** at the **Sam's Point Center**, a fire ecologist named Gabe Chapin will explain it all and then take people on the three-mile hike around the loop. You must register for this, so call **647-7989** if interested. There is a \$7 parking fee.



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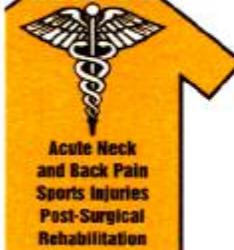
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