



## ***Land Conservation***

*The following are examples of projects where open space is preserved through a conservation easement, donation or land purchase. In most of the cases, the transactions created very desirable public parklands with access to pristine woodlands and waterfronts, while also safeguarding watersheds and wildlife.*

### **Sisters of Our Lady of Christian Doctrine, Nyack, New York**

Estate planning by the Sisters of Our Lady of Christian Doctrine created a 30-acre park in Nyack, New York that offers the public scenic views of the Hudson River. The proposed property sale in December of 2016 to the nonprofit conservation group, Trust for Public Land (TPL) is especially significant because the site is adjacent to three existing public greenspaces of Nyack Beach State Park, Rockland Lake State Park and Hook Mountain State Park. TPL will in turn convey the property to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The cost of the land purchase is expected to be covered by the state's park department, with additional contributions from the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, the Village of Upper Nyack, both the Village and Town of Clarkstown and the Durst Organization, a supporter of TPL.

The land sale is expected to exclude an additional six acres with 19 buildings, including a convent, an outdoor chapel and rustic cabins that are used for weekend retreats and educational programs. The sisters have formed a separate nonprofit to oversee existing and future program services at Marydell Faith and Life Center.

To read more: [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/nyregion/new-york-to-gain-30-acres-of-parkland-from-catholic-nuns.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/nyregion/new-york-to-gain-30-acres-of-parkland-from-catholic-nuns.html?_r=0)

## **Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, Sparkill, New York**

The sale of 149 acres by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill to the conservation group, Scenic Hudson in 2015 set in perpetuity the public greenspace now known as Falling Waters Preserve in Glasco, New York.

The congregation granted a five-year conservation easement to Scenic Hudson in 2010, creating the preserve and allowed the nonprofit to design three miles of public access trails. As the easement's expiration approached, the sisters decided to sell the property to Scenic Hudson, which had launched the Save the Land that Matters Most initiative three years prior to protect land with the highest scenic, ecological and agricultural significance.

The Dominican sisters are active in the group, Religious Organizations Along the River (ROAR), so green-space preservation aligned with a land ethic to provide ecologically sound care of all lands. The preserve offers the public direct access to more than a mile of Hudson River shoreline, views of the Catskills and two waterfalls.

To read more: <http://www.dailyfreeman.com/general-news/20150206/scenic-hudson-buys-falling-waters-preserve-in-glasco-from-religious-order-for-25m>

## **Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Ossining, New York**

As part of its commitment to ROAR's land ethic, the Maryknoll Sisters set aside 42 acres of their 67-acre campus in Ossining, New York as a conservation easement. Established in 2012, the easement maintains native woodlands and wetlands that border the Croton-to-Highlands Region Biodiversity Area.

Most of the easement is wetlands, which was a significant factor in the sisters' interest in preserving the land as a natural greenway.

The easement is monitored by the Westchester Land Trust, with the congregation responsible for keeping the woodland pathway clear of any fallen trees or tree limbs.

To read more: <http://patch.com/new-york/ossining/bp--maryknoll-sisters-create-easement-protecting-land96c46cca6e>



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## **Order of St. Benedict of New Jersey, Morristown, New Jersey**

The Benedictine monks of St. Mary's Abbey sold 188 acres of land in 2009 to create a park on one of the last large undeveloped tracts in Morris County, New Jersey. Funding for the purchase came from New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, the Trust for Public Land and several county and town agencies in Morris County. Beyond the greenspace, plans included the creation of a four-acre children's park.

The land sale resolved a long simmering debate between the religious community and vocal residents. The monks' original plan was to build a nonprofit retirement community of 240 apartments and cottages, plus assisted living units on a portion of the land. However New Jersey State eventually rejected the retirement community plan and the National Park Service threatened legal action if the township approved zoning changes for the land.

To read more: [http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2009/07/st\\_marys\\_abbey\\_sells\\_188\\_acres.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2009/07/st_marys_abbey_sells_188_acres.html)



## **Sisters of St. John the Baptist, Mendham, New Jersey**

The Sisters of St. John the Baptist supported the creation of a new 112-acre public park through the sale of property that was formerly used as a convent, school, orphanage and retreat center. The sale was completed in 2009, with payments received from multiple sources including

the land conservation group, Trust for Public Land, the Mendham Township, New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, and the New Jersey Water Supply Authority.

The township had long sought to protect the land from development because it is located at the headwaters of Gladstone Brook, which feeds an important source of drinking water from the Raritan River. The property, now known as Mosle Preserve, includes hiking and nature trails, plus athletic fields, and is near the 340-acre Schiff Nature Preserve.

To read more: <https://www.tpl.org/media-room/historic-convent-will-be-protected-nj>



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