SOLICITING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN WORKING ON A NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY AND OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF TAGHKANIC, NEW YORK

July 17, 2026

The Town of Taghkanic, Columbia County, New York intends to apply to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Program for a grant to support the creation of a Natural Resource Inventory and an Open Space Inventory and Plan. We understand the Program is likely to issue Requests for Applications in the fall and that grant applications will be due in late fall or winter, with decisions expected in the first quarter of 2027. Thus, the grant-funded work would start in calendar year 2027.

We will need to retain the services of experienced planning and GIS professionals to ensure the success of the project. We are circulating this inquiry in hopes of obtaining preliminary expressions of interest in working with us and advancing our understanding of the tasks to be accomplished and the likely cost, to enable us to write a competent grant application.

The Town of Taghkanic

The Town of Taghkanic occupies about 40 square miles situated in south-central Columbia County, mid-way between the Hudson River and the Massachusetts border. The landscape is dominated by rolling forested hills, farm fields, streams and wetlands, with views of the Berkshire Mountains to the east and the Catskill Mountains to the west. The Taghkanic Creek flows through the width of the Town on its way to the Hudson River. There is a small commercial area at the intersection of the Taconic State Parkway and State Route 82, which is geared to the needs of travelers. With no defined Town center and few opportunities for employment, the Town is almost entirely residential, and a substantial majority of the land is undeveloped. The Town is heavily forested, including a portion of a regionally significant forest corridor that links the mid-Atlantic Appalachians with the mountains of New England, and contains extensive fresh water, habitat and scenic resources.

According to the 2020 Census the population is 1,231, resulting in a density of 30 people per square mile. Single family homes are sparsely dispersed throughout the rural setting. Recent years have seen an increased presence of part-time and weekend residents. New development is almost entirely single family homes, and there has been a marked increase in the number of building permits issued since 2020.

A majority of the Town's undeveloped land is in private ownership, but there are several significant public open spaces. The New Forge State Forest occupies 612 acres of forest land along either side of the Taghkanic Creek; the northern portion of Lake Taconic State Park lies within the Town; and the Columbia Land Conservancy's newly-created Taghkanic Community Forest occupies some 500 acres in the Town's Taghkanic Creek watershed. CLC also owns a 90+/-acre tract on County Route 11, and it holds conservation easements on several privately owned properties within the Town.

The Status of Land Planning in Taghkanic

The Town's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2010. (https://taghkanic.gov/docs/plans/2017-Compplan.pdf). The zoning ordinance, which dates back to the 1980's or earlier, (https://taghkanic.gov/docs/forms/codes/2017-Zoning%20Ordinance.pdf), is in need of substantial revision. Work on that revision is on-going and is believed to be near completion. See https://taghkanic.gov/policy_docs#laws.

The Town has an active Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) and a Climate Smart Communities Task Force (CSC), which work closely together. The Town has achieved Bronze status in the State's Climate Smart Communities Program. For the past three years, these committees have undertaken a sustained effort to raise community awareness about the nature and importance of the rich ecological assets of the Town, the threats to those assets and steps landowners can take to address those threats. There is a high degree of interest in what individuals can do to nurture and sustain a healthy ecosystem.

Relevant Information Is Readily Available

In recent years, three separate studies have documented extensive and rich ecological assets among the Town's natural resources: Columbia County published a County-wide Natural Resource Inventory in 2019;[1] the Columbia Land Conservancy published a Taghkanic Headwaters Conservation Plan in 2022;[2] and the Columbia Land Conservancy has very recently published a Conservation Plan for the entire county.[3] Collectively, these documents have gathered together an enormous amount of data mapping and characterizing the geology, topography, soils, vegetation, habitat resources, groundwater, surface water and scenic resources of the Town. We believe

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[1] https://sites.google.com/columbiacountyny.com/emc/natural-resource-inventory-nri);
[2]https://static1.squarespace.com/static/65fc35ab641b767675ecc959/t/65fc8f96cebdfc73fdab4569/1711050649007/Hyperlinked_Docment_Final_Updated.pdf);
[3] https://columbialand.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/CLC-Technical-Report_Final_reduced.pdf?utm_source=Columbia+Land+Conservancy&utm_campaign=1bec29854c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_08_16_02_49_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-27634f9e1d-41819

the existence of these studies should enable us to expeditiously develop the NRI portion of the project and move on to create an OSP as a single project.

Developing the NRI/OSP

The content, narrative, and maps in the NRI/OSP document will generally follow the recommendations and guidance provided in Creating a Natural Resources Inventory (NYSDEC 2014) and the Local Open Space Planning Guide (NYSDOS 2004, reprinted in 2024).

All parts of the project will be conducted in collaboration with an advisory committee to be appointed by the Town Board. The consultant will work closely with the committee to establish the scope of the NRI/OSP document(s) and develop a work plan that will most efficiently coordinate the creation of the NRI with development of the OSP. The committee will review drafts of the NRI/OSP document(s) at several stages and approve the near-final draft(s) before final review by the Town Board.

The Natural Resources Inventory will describe the natural resources of the town, explain their significance to the people of Taghkanic, the threats to those resources, and the kinds of regulatory and non-regulatory measures that can help to restore, maintain, and protect resources of conservation concern. The Open Space Plan and Inventory will use the NRI information to identify the undeveloped land areas that are most important for conservation and describe various ways those areas could be protected through actions of landowners, conservation organizations, and public agencies, and through town policies, practices, and legislation.

The development of the NRI/OSP will involve ample opportunities for input from the public and town agencies. Public outreach for the project should include one or more public surveys, and will involve public meetings to inform attendees about the Plan and solicit ideas and information to help identify the high priority open space areas and the best ways to protect those areas. The public will also have an opportunity to review and comment on a substantial draft of the Plan before it is made final.

What We Hope to Accomplish

We aspire to expeditiously complete a combined NRI and OSP as a necessary first step toward our ultimate goal of updating the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and beginning to implement strategies and policies that address the current challenges we face.

Thanks to the studies and plans that have been completed in recent years, we believe a substantial amount of the data and information required to prepare an NRI is already available. While it may prove necessary to undertake a limited amount of additional data collection and, possibly, field work, we believe it is realistic to pull together the NRI piece

and move ahead on the OSP as a single project. Our hope is that the process can be designed to be completed in no more than two years.

What We Need to Know

We understand the Estuary Program will publish a Request For Applications in the fall, with applications to be due in late in the year, and that grants for these projects range between $10.5 – 75K. To apply, we will need to describe our objectives, the ecological resources we anticipate will be the primary focus of the study and the process we intend to follow to produce a combined NRI/OSP. We will also need to know and be able to justify the amount of grant funding to request.

If this potential engagement may be of interest to your firm, we would be grateful for your input on our idea of doing a consolidated and expeditious NRI/OSP, on the potential cost of planning and GIS services for the project, and any other information or suggestions you might provide that will help to ensure a compelling grant application.

We ask that responses be received no later than July 31, 2026. If you would prefer to respond more informally, we would be more than happy to meet with you in person or online to hear your feedback to this inquiry or to respond to any specific questions you may have.

Responses or questions should be directed to:

Peter Paden, Co-Chair
Conservation Advisory Council and Climate
Smart Communities Task Force
Town of Taghkanic
prpaden@gmail.com
518-265-4801