



KIRKLAND TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Progress | Sherrill Brook Community Forest | Nature Photos

Kirkland Trails Board of Directors

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 Schreve, Ernest Williams,
 Cindy Wirene

Plantings and Knot- weed eradication

Since the spring of 2020, KT has been working to eradicate a large area of invasive Japanese knotweed growing beside the trail near the Dugway Road trailhead. Knotweed spreads through rhizomes and seeds and also from cut pieces of the plant falling on the ground. In 2020, volunteers cut the knotweed stalks to the ground several times to inhibit its growth, and we covered the area with tarps in 2021. We followed up this successful tarping in spring 2022 with stronger, more effective, thick black tarps secured to the slopes of the knotweed infested area. *Continued on p. 4.*



Kirkland Trail South, September 30, 2022. Photos by Ernest Williams.

Kirkland Trails President's letter

I am happy to report that in the last few months we have seen some real progress in trail development in Kirkland. The town highway department recently paved the Dugway Road parking area and permanently positioned the trailhead kiosk. Further enhancements of this area are planned, as well as six more benches along the trail south of Dugway Rd. North of Dugway, the survey of the old railroad right of way has finally been completed and we hope to see trail construction begin soon. Kirkland Trails will use its funds to pay for the survey and construction materials, while the highway department will perform the work.

North of the village of Clinton, we are engaged in clarifying property ownership and obtaining trail easements, which is a lengthy process. The board also remains concerned about the fate of the Clintonview Farms property for sale, as explained in a separate article. This beautiful, forested property may be critical in realizing our goal of trails connecting Clinton and New Hartford.

Kirkland Trails is again part of the Clinton/Kirkland DRI

Grant application this year, in which we continue to advocate for sidewalks along village and adjoining town streets.



Red Trillium, May 1, 2022

Thank you for supporting our mission. Please take advantage of local trails to stay healthy and enjoy our beautiful Upstate New York surroundings.

Jim Bramley, President

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND (SET) MAY MEAN LOSS OF A FOREST

In early 2021, Kirkland Trails joined the Sherrill Brook Community Forest Coalition (SBCFC) in support of their goal to preserve the 450-acre forested property located adjacent to New Hartford’s Sherrill Brook Park, as reported in last fall’s Kirkland Trails’ Newsletter. The eastern portion of this property lies within the Town of New Hartford; the western half in Kirkland. We recognized the recreational potential of this beautiful area replete with deep ravines and cascading streams

and realized the abandoned O&W Railroad corridor, which is the main route for our proposed Chenango Canal Trail, passes along the northern border of this property. The map (p. 3) with the solar site plan encompasses just the northwest corner of this property but shows the O&W Railroad corridor. This path into this property could offer off-road access both to Sherrill Brook Park and to Genesee Street in New Hartford.

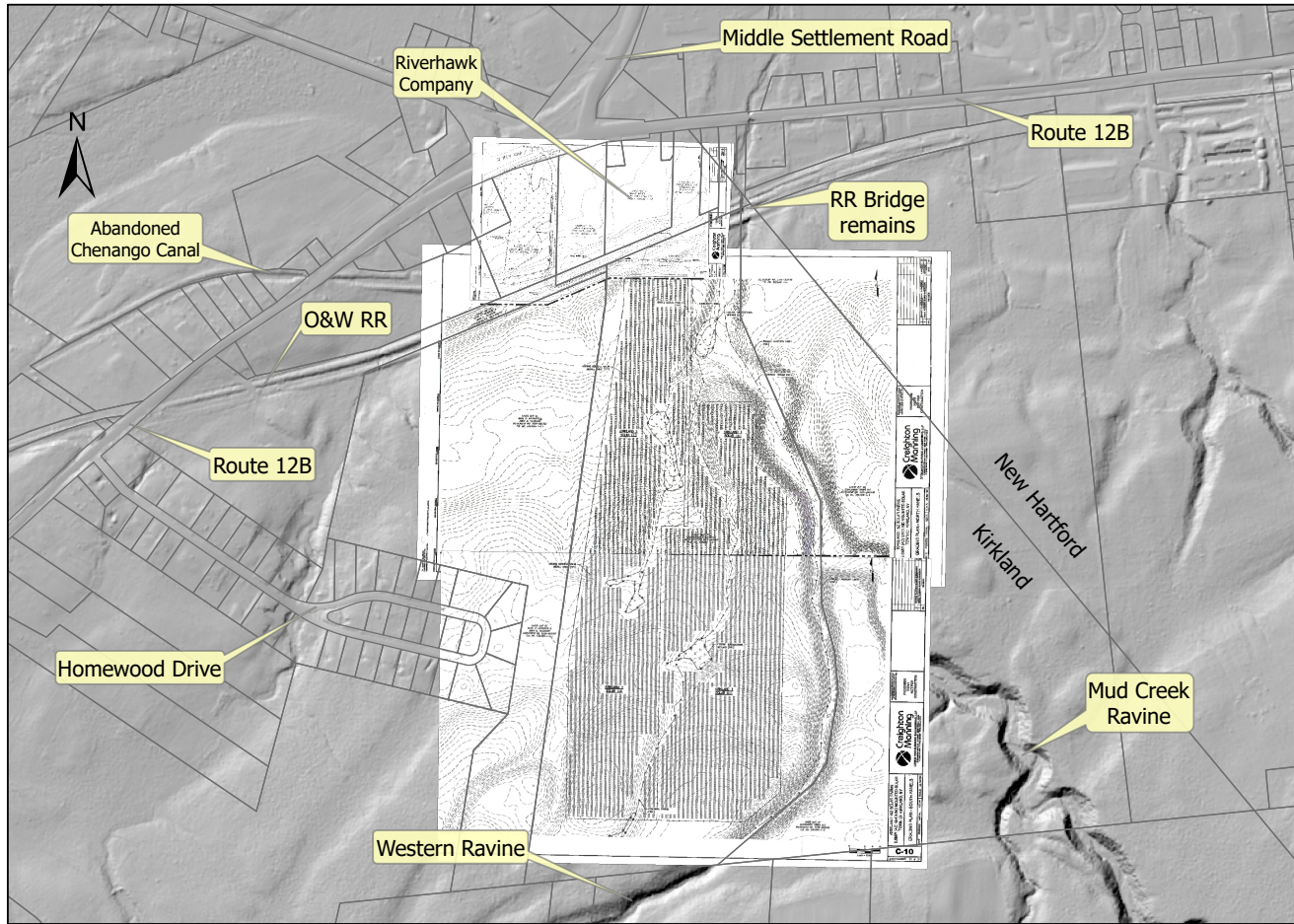
SBCFC tried to purchase the property, but after a couple of solar farm companies expressed interest, the price of the land more than doubled and became out of reach for SBCFC. One of these companies, Atlas Renewables, has a proposal before the Kirkland Town Planning Board for a solar facility directly adjacent to Mud Creek. The proposed project involves clear-cutting of 65 acres of forest on the western most parcel, the most remote portion of this property. They are hoping for a public hearing within the next few months. Atlas spoke at the August and September Planning Board meetings about plans for another solar farm on the New Hartford section of this property in the future.

Several Kirkland Trails members, with the owner’s permission, have explored this area. Trails extend from Sherrill Brook Park west to the Mud Creek ravine and to the remains of the railroad bridge behind the Riverhawk facility, both seen on the map. The solar farm would sit between the western ravine and Mud Creek on the east side and near to Homewood Drive on the west

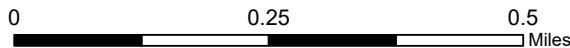


Indigo bunting, May 29, 2022

Atlas Renewable Clintonview Farm Solar Site



For informational purposes only



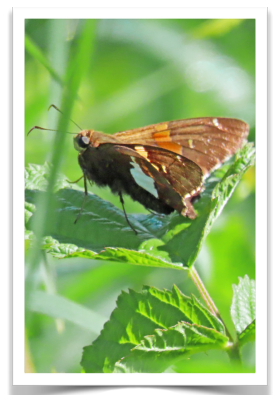
2018 LIDAR data from opentopography.org
 Creighton Manning maps C-8, 9, 10 from FOIL request PDF, georeferenced to Oneida County tax parcel data

side. This area has remained hidden and largely untrammled. It includes perennial streams, five wetlands and lots of trees making it ideal for recreational trails.

We believe the area is not suitable for a large solar farm for environmental reasons. Clear-cutting 65 acres of forest, removal of stumps and roots and compaction of soil during construction could increase storm water runoff and increase flooding in Mud Creek and downstream in the Sauquoit Creek Basin. Mud Creek and Sauquoit Creek previously flooded in 2013 even without this increased stormwater runoff burden. The effect on the Homewood Drive neighborhood has not been addressed. Besides these obvious problems, there are concerns about fragmentation of wildlife habitat, alterations of water quality, damage to wetlands and loss of vegetative buffers at streams and gorges.

Why place a solar farm in a mature forest when there is plenty of suitable open space in our area? The release of currently stored carbon in trees and loss of future carbon sequestration by these trees offsets some of the environmental benefits of solar. In a time of climate crisis, we need both solar and forest.

Based on these concerns, the Kirkland Trails Board has passed a resolution in opposition to the development of a solar farm on this property. The resolution reads as follows:



Silver skipper, June 29, 2022

“Be it resolved that the Kirkland Trails Board of Directors opposes the construction of the 60-acre solar farm proposed by Atlas Renewables, LLC in the Town of Kirkland portion of the Clintonview Farms property. Kirkland Trails strongly supports the responsible development of renewable energy projects, including solar; however, we feel that this is not an appropriate location for a solar farm.

This project would jeopardize our goal of creating multiuse trails connecting the Towns of Kirkland and New Hartford. It also would carry serious environmental risks due to the clear-cutting of 65 acres of forest on sloping terrain that includes deep ravines and Mud Creek, a tributary of Sauquoit Creek, which already has significant flooding problems. The risks of developing a solar farm at this site include, but are not limited to, stormwater flooding downstream, water quality degradation, loss of forest carbon sequestration, and loss of wildlife habitat.

We strongly urge the Town of Kirkland Planning Board to reject the application by Atlas Renewables for approval of this project. “

If you support the Kirkland Trails Board position and wish to stop the construction of this solar farm in this forest, we urge you to share your views with the Town Planning Board at: Kirkland Planning Board, 100 North Park Row, PO Box 235, Clinton, NY 13323. When we know, we’ll inform you about the public hearing.

Chip Bassett & Jim Frederick



Recent paving by Town of Kirkland Highway Dept. at the Dugway trailhead. Photo by Sharon Williams

volunteer Jim Shreve has been diligently weeding the knotweed next to the trail and near the stream on the east side of the trail. Other volunteers planted pumpkins near the stream; at least one pumpkin grew. The tarping and Jim’s weeding efforts have resulted in a nearly complete eradication of knotweed growth in that area. Some native plants grew well beside the trail; flowers bloomed there throughout the growing season.

Germaine Gogel



Thin-leaved Coneflower, September 30, 2022

Winter Snowmobile Use

Because the local snowmobile club has ridden and maintained the section of the Kirkland Trails accessed from Dugway Road before it officially became a year-round, multi-use trail, the Town Board voted to allow snowmobile use of the trail during the winter. All snowshoers, skiers, and walkers are invited to continue to use the trail in winter.

Knotweed, continued

In 2022 we also planted mixtures of wildflower seeds next to the trail, encouraging the growth of native plants to compete with knotweed in that area. Throughout the 2022 growing season,