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NEWS

Connect with nature at new 92-acre park

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STOCKPORT — Scenic Hudson broke ground on the new Harrier Hill Park in Stockport Wednesday, with the help of many politicians, officials, environmentalists, and residents.

The event, which Scenic Hudson President Ned Sullivan said was originally expected to be a quiet affair, turned into a pastoral press conference in a rolling field overlooking the Hudson River, attended by U.S. Rep. Scott Murphy, D-20th District, state Sen. Steven Saland, R,C,I-Poughkeepsie, state Assemblyman Marcus Molinaro, R,C,I,-Red Hook, Supervisor Leo Pulcher, R-Stockport.

Standing with his back to the panoramic view of the river, on what was once an old dairy farm off Rod and Gun Club Road, Pulcher opened the event. "Harrier Hill is a great place for Stockport residents and visitors to admire spectacular views and connect with nature," Pulcher said, "the new amenities will make the park even more inviting to visit."

Those amenities, when the park is completed in October, will include an open sided pavilion with a corncrib inspired design as an homage to the areas agricultural past, a handicapped accessible trail, an information kiosk and parking area. Sullivan said park designers purposely planned features to be non-intrusive and to let the landscape speak for itself.

"The sweeping vistas from Harrier Hill Park are among the most breathtaking anywhere in the Hudson Valley," Sullivan said, "the amenities will provide wonderful opportunities to experience them."

Murphy said protection of open spaces goes hand in hand with the economic development of Columbia County. "Harrier Hill Park will be a great resource for the 20th District. Scenic Hudson has done an admirable job working to conserve this land for the enjoyment of all residents and tourists of the Hudson Valley," the congressman said, "public spaces are essential to preserving quality of life, while also giving the added benefit of increasing tourism activity in the region."

Funding for the park, commemorated as part of the Quadricentennial Celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river, was provided in large part through an Environmental Protection Fund grant from the State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Saland concurred, calling the park a "regional gem," saying the park exemplified the beauty off the valley which, he continued, rivaled that of anywhere else in the world.

"Scenic Hudson is again to be commended for preserving these 92 acres and making them available for us and those who follow," Assemblyman Molinaro said next, "by setting aside and preserving vital environmental resources, and these national treasures, we do what matters most and uphold our responsibility to past and future generations."



Ned Sullivan, president of Scenic Hudson, speaks to the crowd gathered for the groundbreaking of the organization's new Harrier Hill nature area in Stockport Wednesday. Joining Sullivan are, from left, state Sen. Steve Saland, Stockport Supervisor Leo Pulcher, Congressman Scott Murphy and Assemblyman Marc Molinaro. Robert Ragaini/Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

The park is part of 193 acres of former farmland and wooded land Scenic Hudson Purchased in 2004. the group has conserved more then 500 acres in Stockport alone. Scenic Hudson hopes to eventually connect the area to the 714-acre Greenport Conservation Area preserved by the Open Space Institute. If connected, hikers would be able to traverse five miles of protected trails.

The park is named for the Northern Harrier, a long tailed hawk, often seen flying above the park land and over the river.

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