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## **New Conservation Center Will Welcome Visitors at Sam's Point Preserve**

The Nature Conservancy and Open Space Institute Celebrate Opening of Sam's Point Conservation Center

Cragsmoor, NY—May 22, 2005—The Nature Conservancy and the Open Space Institute, Inc, celebrated today the opening of the Sam's Point Conservation Center at Sam's Point Preserve in Cragsmoor.

The Center highlights the partnership between the two non-profit conservation groups which have worked together to protect this globally important natural resource and brings to light, for the benefit of the public, the remarkable and unusual characteristics of the preserve. The Nature Conservancy built the center, using environmentally friendly or "green" design principles, to serve as a base for scientific research, land stewardship and education. The Center features interactive exhibits that explore the unique geological, ecological and cultural features of the Preserve.



Sam's Point Conservation Center  
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NY State Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, State Senator John Bonacic and Eastern New York's Executive Director Katie Dolan await the unveiling of the mural at the newly opened Sam's Point Conservation Center.

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Sam Pryor, patron of the mural, with Linda Thomas, the artist.

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The 3,000 square foot "green" building was designed by Matthew Bialecki, AIA, to compliment and reflect the dramatic setting at Sam's Point. Constructed of "Gunk-crete"—a locally manufactured cement product that evokes the bedrock of the Shawangunks—and sustainably harvested timbers, the building is sheltered by a recycled steel roof. The center demonstrates practical applications of energy-efficient, state-of-the-art building practices and passive solar design that will provide maximum comfort to Preserve visitors. The special design features of the building result in a nearly 50% increase in energy-efficiency over comparable buildings. The building and sitework were constructed by Storm King Contracting.

The overall site design, developed by Stefan Yarabek, ASLA, of Hudson and Pacific Design, includes ecological restoration of the landscape in the vicinity of the Center, improved parking and signage. Cara Lee, Director of the Conservancy's Shawangunk Ridge Program, said site restoration around the new center features native plants collected at the Preserve by interns and volunteers and is a model of ecological restoration techniques that help sustain local biodiversity. In managing the property, The Conservancy relies on science-based strategies to sustain the fragile ecology of the Preserve.

Exhibits, designed by Donald Watson, FAIA, of Earthrise Interpretive Design, resulted from input from local community members. The exhibits feature a forty-foot mural by artist Linda Thomas, depicting the distinctive habitats of the Preserve, including the globally rare ridge top dwarf pine barrens and ice caves environs. Visitors of all ages will delight in finding more than 90 species of plants, birds, and animals found at the Preserve within the expanse of the mural. The work of local artists Roger Baker and Jack Fagan are also featured in the exhibits.

According to Cara Lee, "The new Conservation Center is designed to inspire and inform visitors about the extraordinary beauty and special ecology of Sam's Point and the Shawangunks." She added, "The Center will welcome school groups, volunteers, hikers and others who come to the Preserve, providing a place of discovery for all who visit. People will come away with a better appreciation of the rare gem we have in our midst at Sam's Point. "

The Open Space Institute acquired the 5,770-acre Sam's Point Preserve in a series of transactions that began in the 1980s and culminated in 1997. OSI acquired the land through its land acquisition affiliate, the Open Space Conservancy. According to OSI's president, Joe Martens, the protection of land in and around the Shawangunk Ridge is a top organizational priority because of escalating development pressure in Sullivan and

Ulster counties. Martens noted the ecologically rare landscape in the Shawangunks as well as its visually arresting scenery. The two highest summits in the entire 245-mile Shawangunk Range are located at the Sam's Point Preserve, which is managed by The Nature Conservancy. "The partnership between OSI and TNC has resulted in a preserve that combines land conservation, environmental education and ecological management practices. With the new Conservation Center, we have a unique opportunity for education and exploration of this globally important natural resource." said Martens.

The Northern Shawangunks are widely recognized as one of the most important sites for biodiversity conservation in the northeastern United States. The ridge supports more than 35 natural communities, with five that are globally rare. Sam's Point Preserve is home to the world's best example of a ridge top dwarf pitch pine barrens, where more than 30 rare plant and animal species can be found. These features led The Nature Conservancy to designate the ridge as one of Earth's "Last Great Places" for landscape-level biodiversity conservation. "This new center will help people who visit the Shawangunks better understand this distinctive and fragile ecosystem and the importance of protecting it," said Carol Ash, Executive Director of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and manager of the neighboring Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

Funds for the project are from public and private sources, with a substantial grant from the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act.

Sam's Point Preserve is open year round. For information on programs, call the Preserve at (845) 647-7989.

Visit OSI online at [www.osiny.org](http://www.osiny.org) for OSI publications, press releases and additional information about the Shawangunk Ridge Greenway.

The Open Space Institute protects scenic, natural and historic landscapes to ensure public enjoyment, conserve habitats and sustain community character. OSI achieves its goals through land acquisition, conservation easements, special loan programs, and creative partnerships.

The Open Space Institute ([www.osiny.org](http://www.osiny.org)) has protected more than 90,000 acres in New York State. Through its Northern Forest Protection Fund, OSI has assisted in the protection of more than 1,100,000 acres in northern NY, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. OSI's New Jersey Conservation Loan Program has helped protect over 10,500 acres in the nation's most densely populated state.