

# Hillside Woods Forest Inventory & Management Plan

Public Meeting Thursday, June 7th @ 7pm  
Public Library, Hastings-On-Hudson

**Who We Are** LBS Ecological specializes in Ecological Planning & Design. Our team includes:

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LBS is working closely with the village staff and public officials of Hastings- on-Hudson.

**DEC Community Forestry Program** NYS Urban & Community Forestry Program is a partnership between DEC forestry professionals, public and private individuals, and volunteer organizations. It supports communities in comprehensive planning, management, and education to create healthy urban and community forests which enhance the quality of life for residents. The Hillside Woods Forest Inventory & Management Plan is grant-funded through this program.

**What is Urban & Community Forestry?** All of the trees within a town, village, or city make up the "community forest". Urban and Community Forestry is the management of community forests to establish and maintain healthy trees for air and water quality benefits, energy savings, environmental health, as well as to enhance the quality of life for urban residents. The urban and community forest also contains wildlife, waterways, built roads and structures, and people.

**Why is Urban Forestry Important?** Trees provide numerous environmental, social and economic benefits for people, yet urban areas present challenging environments for trees to grow and survive in. A healthy forest has a natural diversity, thick leaf litter to absorb rainwater, which maintains humidity of forest, a balance of predators and prey, multiple vertical layers of forest including ground cover, shrub layer, mid & overstory trees.

**Benefits of Trees in Urban Areas** Studies show that trees improve air and water quality, reduce flooding, reduce cooling and heating energy needs, increase property values and improve the quality of life for people and wildlife around them. Trees remove air and water pollutants through both their root systems and their leaves. Tree canopies shade buildings, sidewalks, streets and other structures keeping them cooler in summer and can shelter buildings from cold winds in winter months, overall reducing energy costs.

Studies have found that exposure to trees reduces the symptoms of stress and depression, can aid in the recovery from surgery, and reduce the incidence of domestic violence. People are more likely to exercise if parks are nearby. When people utilize parks and street trees, they are more likely to meet and establish bonds with their neighbors, creating a sense of community.

**Hillside Woods & Park History** Hillside Woods ~ 52 acres & Hillside Park ~48 acres, includes Hillside Elementary School, pool, tennis courts, & Sugar Pond. "Save Hillside Woods" Community Group formed in mid 1980's to conserve the woods & the Village of obtained the Woods in 1993; 25 years ago the parks had dense bramble and diverse vegetation at ground level, and the next generation of trees was nurtured there. In the last two decades, however, deer have decimated almost everything native from six feet high down to ground level. Resulting in little to no regeneration, leaf litter, thin soils, and non-native / invasive plant proliferation. Need for restoration has now become abundantly clear and is becoming a priority.

**Who's Involved** Hastings-on-Hudson Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, & Tree Preservation Board; Community groups: Hastings Historical Society, Hastings High School Environmental Club, Hillside Nature Guides Program, The Hastings Vine Squad, Hudson River Audubon Society, Dobbs Ferry Conservation Advisory Board & more.

**Current State of the Woods** 2017 "State of the Woods" public meetings **Challenges:**

1. Climate change, higher temps, water stress, oak hickory forest migrating northward, maple-beech-birch retreating; Invasives moving in; Dead / dying trees (i.e. ash, hemlock, beech)
2. Deer (& earthworms) impact forest regen. & soil greatly, lack of understory shrubs & herbs, deer in poor condition overcrowded, people injured in deer-car collisions & sick from tick-borne disease; Invasives moving in; Understory bird species decreasing
3. Trash & dog waste, need to build respect & ecological literacy for woods

**Opportunities:** Bobcat, fisher, & beaver are returning (wolf, black bear, mountain lion, hunters?) Vine Squad, involving Haven from Conservation Commission

Deer sterilization program underway; Deer exclosures (2 erected in 2014) & monitoring program  
Community involvement, regular cleanup & informational programs

More comprehensive perimeter fence w/ maintenance protocol? Maintain areas without invasives within the woods? Thin young trees in gap?

**Forest Inventory & Management plan Goals:** Forest Regeneration, Restoration of Native Ecology, Maintain Public Safety & Enjoyment of the Woods; As part of the NYS DEC Community Forestry Program, this project will develop a long-term action plan that contains information, recommendations, and strategy to effectively and proactively manage Hillside Woods. The goals of the Forest Management Plan are to regain a healthy forest, including habitat creation, reduced stormwater runoff, improved air quality, recreation, visual screening and reduction of noise pollution, protecting private property values, limiting residential sprawl, public enjoyment of the woods, and to enhance students' educational experience.

**People in the Park** Planning includes the people of Hastings-on-Hudson because Hillside Woods and Park is an urban park. We need to consider programming in human use and enjoyment of the forest. This is exactly why we are hosting this presentation this evening! We aim to both educate and solicit public opinion.