



# Southern Madison Heritage Trust

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Serving the six towns of Brookfield, Eaton,  
Georgetown, Hamilton, Lebanon, and Madison

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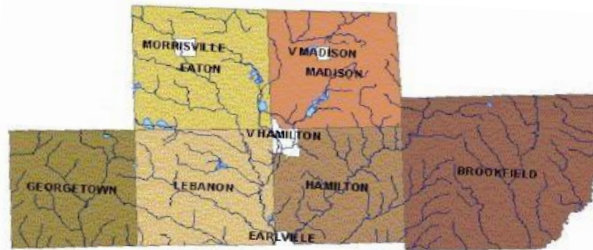
Thomas Parish

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December 9, 2024

Greetings from the  
Board of Southern  
Madison Heritage  
Trust

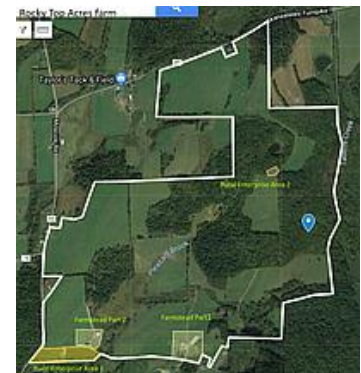


## Summary of Changes and Activities for 2024

**Financial:** SMHT has a responsibility to preserve donations with an investment program to stay ahead of inflation. With the current interest rates, SMHT now keeps only a small operating fund in a checking account locally, and the rest, stewardship and project funds, in high yield insured investments

**NY State Ag & Markets grant:** This allows SMHT to provide qualified appraisals of potential conservations easements protecting farms for future generations. One such appraisal has been completed and we are in discussion with one more farm. There is no cost to the farmers. The grant program's purpose is the long range statewide protection of farms, especially those which may take advantage of future grant opportunities like the farm noted below in the Farmland Protection Grant.

**Farmland Preservation Grant:** As noted in previous newsletters, SMHT was successful in receiving a NY State Farmland Preservation Incentive Grant – “Dairy Transitions” for a farm in Brookfield. We are wrapping up the required documentation this month for project approval by NYS. The aerial photo shows the farm area of 538 acres with four specific zones carved out for the farmsteads, residences, an enterprise zone and a rental cabin for agritourism.



**Wetland Conservation/Restoration Project at Schapiro Reserve:** The Upper Susquehanna Coalition 2023 project to restore the wetland and hillside areas to something like its historic condition shows good survival of the plantings. The purpose is to enhance downstream water quality and remediate the damage done by farming and disturbances during the many years the land was in active use.

Building on the success of the Schapiro project, the USC worked with the Village of Hamilton to reforest an additional 3 acres of floodplain in 2024. The combined efforts of SMHT and the village have resulted in significant improvements in wetland habitat and water quality in Payne Creek. The planted area is adjacent to the Schapiro Reserve and the Water Treatment Plant. Greg Owens, Chair of the Village Tree Committee monitored the project and contributed this and other items.



**Brackett Woods Tree Planting:** Owned by Tom and Liz Brackett, the 26 acres of meadow and woodland are protected by a conservation easement held by SMHT. This year, Greg worked with the Bracketts' sons Phil and Ted to plant 50 sugar maple trees in forest openings established following a managed timber harvest. As deer browsing reduces natural regeneration, hand planting with shelters is one strategy for sustaining our native hardwood forest. (Photo by Greg of Ted and Phil Brackett at work.)

**Ongoing Projects:** All the SMHT properties and easements have been monitored in 2024 as required in our long-term goal to achieve accreditation. Semi-annual roadside cleanup continued on 2 miles of Rte 12B. The HCS 5<sup>th</sup> grade visits to Leland are on schedule, and both educational and fun for all involved. An area where much of the tree planting has occurred over the last 15 years, has been designated the "Fifth Grade Forest." The "Forest," a mix of deciduous and conifers has over 100 trees, some 10-15 ft tall. The "forest" is expanded each year with new plantings and existing trees are mulched by the students with wood chips.

**Volunteer Support:** Students from Morrisville State College again removed invasive species expanding the area of meadow at the Leland Reserve. Colgate COVE students cut back brush to open trails at the Schapiro Reserve. Volunteers assisted with the semi-annual road cleanup.

**Goals for 2025** include creating a connecting trail from the Schapiro Reserve to College Street in Hamilton, which would connect to the southern end of the O&W RR Trail leading into the village center. Three Colgate students worked on a plan as part of their environmental studies major. The plan was refined by Tom, Mike and Greg SMHT board members and presented to the Village Trustees.

SMHT continues to host annual education and volunteer programs with Hamilton Central School, Morrisville State College, and Colgate University.

It was very satisfying to meet so many of you in person at our annual picnic in August! We plan to continue that custom with informative speakers about land use and the environment.

**No newsletter is complete without a request for support. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to SMHT. Your donation will help enable SMHT to continue its valuable work of conserving open space and agriculture in our six-town area and continuing our popular education program with Hamilton and Madison 5<sup>th</sup> grades.**

**As an all-volunteer nonprofit, 100% of funds are dedicated to SMHT's mission and fully deductible according to IRS regulations.**

A card and envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

**Check out [www.SMHT.org](http://www.SMHT.org) for information about our activities and protected lands or pay a visit to one of our properties with trails.**

**Thank you for your support of the only land trust serving Madison County,**