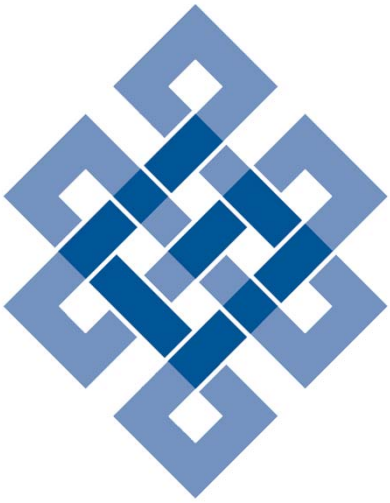

Garrison Institute
Hudson River Project
Comprehensive Report

September 2007

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Rev. Patricia Ackerman, Hudson River Project Program Director

Hudson River Project Steering Committee:

Tracy Basile, *Professor of Indigenous Studies, Pace University*; Nicola Coddington, *Lieutenant Governor's Task Force on Renewable Energy and Interfaith Power & Light*; Sister Carol D'Angelo, *Sisters of Charity and Religious Organizations on the River (ROAR)*; Melissa Everett, *Sustainable Hudson Valley*; Sister Nancy Erts, *Dominican Sisters of Hope and ROAR*; Sister Mary Ann Garisto, *Sisters of Charity, ROAR and Sisters Hill Farm*; the Rev. Francis Geer, *Rector, St. Philips Church in the Highlands, Garrison*; the Rev. Stephen Holton, *St. Paul's on the Hill, Ossining and Chair, Episcopal Diocese Environmental Commission*; George Klein, *Sierra Club, Chair of Lower Hudson Chapter*; Kristin Marcell, *NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program*; Sean Nolon*, Nolon Associates*; Fred and Anne Osborn; George Potanovic, *Stony Point Action Committee for the Environment*; Evan Pritchard, *Native American Historian, Albany*; Lisa Rainwater, *Policy Director, Riverkeeper*; Z. I. Sanchez, *Architect and NeighborWorks America*; Fred Turpin, *Ridgefield Clergy Association*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE GARRISON INSTITUTE'S HUDSON RIVER PROJECT COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

The following is a comprehensive report on the activities and outcomes of the Hudson River Project, a program of the Garrison Institute's Initiative on Transformational Ecology.

The Garrison Institute is a non-profit organization founded in 2003, whose mission is to apply the transformative power of contemplative methods to pervasive social and environmental challenges. Contemplation – the practice of reflecting deeply – transforms one's state of mind, thereby changing perceptions and opening fresh possibilities for action. The Garrison Institute applies contemplative methods to solving problems by conducting research, convening in-depth dialogues of scientists and practitioners, supporting the growth of communities of practice and disseminating important findings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Environmental issues have always been challenging, but their scale and complexity have grown dramatically in recent years. Climate change, natural disasters, habitat and species loss, food chain disruption, water and other resource depletion, and buildup of hazardous, toxic and nuclear wastes are all accelerating. Environmental advocates and concerned citizens from all walks of life are increasingly searching for a transformative solution that will rapidly change our behavior, radically reduce our environmental impacts and bring us within range of a sustainable future. Science, advocacy, policy and market forces are evolving to address the problem. But many have reached the conclusion that the more subjective forces of values and beliefs will be decisive in reaching the much-looked-for "tipping point" that will transform the problem.

The Garrison Institute's Transformational Ecology Initiative seeks to reconnect the environmental movement, today largely policy- and science-based, with the values, ethics and spirituality of caring for the earth. There is a growing sense within the environmental movement that only when such connections are made can the political will be harnessed to make the necessary public policy changes. Contemplative practices can help bring diverse groups to deeper states of thought from which fresh solutions can arise. As such

they have an important role to play in supporting a values-based, inclusive approach to environmental issues that can help broaden the appeal and improve the efficacy of environmental work.

The Hudson River Project (HRP) is a local / regional program within the Garrison Institute's Transformational Ecology Initiative. It has effectively launched a transformational ecology movement here in the Hudson River region. It works with faith leaders to generate values-based conversation on environmental concerns, to catalyze "greening" of houses of worship and to encourage the use of spiritual teachings and contemplative wisdom in support of the social and behavioral changes needed to produce a healthier environment.

The Hudson River Project was first conceived in 2003 by program advisor Mark Walters as a necessary place-based dimension of its Transformational Ecology work. Its core idea is that values, ethics, faith and contemplative-based perspectives are important aspects of caring effectively for the environment, just as care for the environment and a sense of the sacredness of the earth are deep dimensions of widely held ethics, values, beliefs and spiritual traditions. Deep listening, compassion, willingness to understand complex or contentious issues from another person's perspective, seeking new frames for intractable problems and finding new, transformative solutions, cultivating a sense of connectedness with our community and environment, honing a sense of personal responsibility and accountability for the impacts we cause – these are all contemplative skills with the potential to create transformative results.

After two years of planning and outreach, the Hudson River Project was launched in 2005 to help articulate and strengthen the contemplative dimensions of environmental discourse in the Hudson River bioregion.

Led by program director Rev. Patricia Ackerman, the Project compiled a comprehensive database of congregations, faith communities and multi-religious and environmental organizations in the Hudson region from Albany, New York to Newark, New Jersey (there are some 11,000 communities of faith in New York State alone, as well as a wealth of environmental groups in New York and the Hudson Valley) and used it to build and convene a collaborative network.

In 2005-2006, the Hudson River Project attracted considerable community and media attention by holding a series of held twelve monthly public conversations on the practical and spiritual dimensions of specific regional environmental issues. The issues discussed in each event corresponded roughly to the 12-point *Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2005-2009* compiled by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

(NYSDEC)'s Hudson River Estuary Project, which helped the Garrison Institute frame the Project. Designed to engender deep listening, seek common ground and articulate shared values and ideas, these events collectively attracted thousands of participants, including hundreds of key area environmental leaders, faith leaders and congregations.

With input drawn from participants during the conversations, the HRP Steering Committee drafted a sign-on declaration articulating shared values and action commitments, and put it into circulation for further input and signature. It was formally launched as *The Hudson River Compact: Our Shared Nature* on Earth Day 2007 and to date has nearly 200 signatories including diverse faith leaders, environmental and civic groups, and even municipal and state government entities.

In 2007-2008, the HRP held quarterly consultations for Hudson Valley faith leaders working on greening initiatives. These by-invitation events attracted hundreds of leaders of diverse faiths from throughout the region. They explored practical and spiritual dimensions of environmental work with faith groups, from theology to New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) grants; from switching to compact fluorescent bulbs to fighting sprawl and lobbying for sustainable town planning; from updates on climate change to the sharing of hopes, fears, and the sense of empowerment and commitment people of faith feel in the face of the current crisis.

From these efforts some key take-home lessons have emerged: profound common ground between sacred and scientific views of the environment exists and is relatively easy to evoke. This common ground is fertile soil, which deserves cultivation into a broader, stronger, values-based environmental movement in this region and beyond.

The Hudson River Project in its first two years has already helped establish a transformational ecology movement in the Hudson region, which continues to grow. Many area congregations have announced greening initiatives as a result of their involvement with the Hudson River Project, and some have framed and adopted transformational ecology statements and policies of their own, including the Maryknoll Sisters' "Land Ethic" and the Ridgefield (CT) Clergy Association's published statement, "On the Preservation of God's Creation."

Having launched this regional transformational ecology movement, the current opportunity for the Garrison Institute is to nurture its continued growth and replicate it more widely by working with strategic partners in the wider community. For example, in 2007-2008 the Hudson River Project is partnering with key environmental and faith groups to bring multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-generational forums on transformational ecology to communities and congregations throughout the region.

CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACHES TO REAL WORLD CHANGE

The Garrison Institute pursues initiatives combining contemplative perspectives with tangible social and environmental change in three key areas: Contemplation and Education, Transforming Trauma and Transformational Ecology. These initiatives are all evidence-based, professionally staffed, and committed to intellectual rigor, experiential depth, effective collaboration and coalition building, and outcomes that are documented and disseminated.

Our Contemplation and Education Initiative works with educators to help improve school environments, focus attention and boost academic achievement and emotional maturity, including for students exposed to risk factors such as poverty, violence, and divorce.

Our Transforming Trauma Initiative identifies and teaches contemplative best practices for trauma workers such as emergency responders, social workers, therapists, and counselors, alleviating such underrecognized but pervasive problems as "secondary traumatization" or "vicarious traumatization," reducing stress and burn-out among trauma workers and promoting better outcomes for trauma survivors.

Our Transformational Ecology Initiative uses contemplative perspectives to create subjective shifts in prevailing attitudes towards the environment and environmental issues.

On one level, it does this by reconnecting the environmental movement, today largely policy- and science-based, with its deeper roots in the values, ethics and spirituality of caring for the earth and understanding our personal, direct relationship with it. These deeper values are surprisingly widely held, even by people who don't self-identify as environmentalists or activists, so articulating them can do much to broaden the appeal and base of the environmental movement, including mobilizing faith-based and other groups who share these values.

On a different level, the initiative also works to create objective shifts in the field of environmental advocacy itself, building collaborative networks between organizations. For example, through thoughtfully planned retreats with environmental leaders, our Climate Change program has led major environmental groups to collaborate on a

common climate change message and "brand," and to join forces behind a common set of public policy goals.

In general, values-based, inclusive approaches can help ground and support the difficult work environmental leaders and activists are already doing, while also broadening and mobilizing the larger base of citizens whose values include care for the environment. Both sides of this equation can be tranformative on a personal level, and both are needed to help the environmental movement succeed at this critical juncture.

Each of the Garrison Institute's three Initiatives contains several Projects working concretely towards its goals. Within the Transformational Ecology Initiative, the Garrison Institute's Hudson River Project works with diverse faith communities, environmental organizations and civic groups throughout the Hudson River region, from the greater New York metropolitan area to the Adirondacks, to broaden the regional support base for restoring and protecting the Hudson River and environs. It convenes regional public conversations and private events for faith leaders, helping activists and religious people alike articulate shared values, often focusing on particular environmental issues facing the Hudson bioregion.

Some events bring diverse stakeholders to the table, including those on different sides of an issue, introducing deep listening and contemplative practice into what can otherwise be divisive debates. Others are networking events for leaders of faith communities of all types, offering them resources to help broaden thinking about Hudson River environmental issues, how to change behavior, and how to implement "greening" and environmental education programs in their own institutions, as well as in the wider community.

FROM AN EMERGING FIELD, A UNIQUE PROGRAM

Since the Garrison Institute is part of the Hudson bioregion, located in a renovated riverfront monastery in the Hudson highlands at Garrison, New York, the Hudson River Project conceived by program advisor Mark Walters in 2003 as a necessary place-based dimension of the Garrison Institute's Transformational Ecology work.

The Hudson River Project and the Transformational Ecology initiative are both dedicated to the proposition that values, ethics, faith and contemplative-based perspectives are important aspects of caring effectively for the environment, just as care for the environment and a sense of the sacredness of the earth are deep dimensions of widely held ethics, values, beliefs and spiritual traditions.

Deep listening, compassion, willingness to understand complex or contentious issues from another person's perspective, seeking new frames for intractable problems and finding new solutions, cultivating a sense of connectedness with our community and environment, honing a sense of personal responsibility and accountability for the impacts we cause – these are all contemplative skills. Develop these skills, and the results can be transformative.

Transformation, ecological and otherwise, begins at home, and the Hudson Valley is ours. But beyond this, the Hudson also has a longstanding reputation as something precious and outstanding, and what happens here is often inspiring and consequential in the wider world. The Hudson River and environs are both the landscape of the American sublime, and a biodiverse estuarine system of global ecological importance. It is the birthplace of both the Hudson River School of painting and more recently the modern environmental movement. The landmark effort to save Storm King Mountain established in 1965 the legal standing of US citizens' groups to sue for environmental and aesthetic harms.

Today the Hudson Valley is home to dozens of environmental and conservation organizations including Riverkeeper, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Scenic Hudson, and the Open Space Institute, and the birthplace of the Nature Conservancy is nearby. While environmental initiatives are numerous and flourishing here, when the Garrison Institute was designing its environmental programs in 2003, the region's communities of faith had not generally joined the dialogue about the health of this unique ecosystem.

The Hudson River Project set out to change that. It reached out to faith communities, civic groups and concerned individuals from all faith traditions and walks of life and brought them together with professional environmentalists, scientists and advocates. It initiated conversations in search of common ground, shared values and broader consensus on environmental protection.

We found that concern for the environment is common to people of diverse faiths. But it seems to connect them in a way that does not efface their differences, allowing each tradition to reflect it in its own unique way. "The Hudson River Project not exactly interfaith; it is multireligious," says Rev. Ackerman. "In interfaith work you see the commonalities in various religions, the greatest common denominator, whereas in multireligious work you look at how various religions bring different things to the discussion. We celebrate differences; we aren't interested in smoothing over differences of doctrine or worldview. We are interested in our common connection with the natural world as the shared Ground of our Being out of which all differences arise."

We also discovered that common ground between sacred and scientific views of the environment is not very hard to find. In fact, the two are often the embodied in the same communities, congregations, and even the same people. "Because of my own beliefs as a Christian I saw no contradiction," said Hudson River Project Director Patricia Ackerman, "and I believed it would be an easy alliance."

So it proved. Still, bridging the perspectives of scientists, professional advocates and various faith traditions was largely uncharted territory, especially in this region, and the Hudson River Project broke new ground. It was at inception the only region-wide effort of its kind in the Hudson watershed, and has proved to be a replicable model for other groups in this region and beyond.

But it certainly had precedents, and the idea that the environmental movement needed to migrate from technical and policy battles of opposed special interests to a values-based discourse that was more inclusive, especially for people of faith, was very much in the air when the Project began.

In 2001 twelve Catholic bishops from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia released a pastoral letter entitled "The Columbia River Pastoral: Caring for Creation and the Common Good." The distillation of two years of discussions with diverse communities and people from all walks of life along the 1200 mile Columbia River and surrounding areas, the letter expressed the *"hope that we might work together to develop and implement an integrated spiritual, social and ecological vision for our*

watershed home, a vision that promotes justice for people and stewardship of creation." It envisioned *"communities of faith exercising responsibility for the region…. individuals and communities honestly evaluating [how] their conduct impacts the environment."* From it, the Hudson River Project borrowed key concepts and its subtitle, "Caring for Creation," which has become a term of art for a growing interfaith movement which views environmental protection as moral imperative and spiritual practice, demanding inclusivity and social justice.

In October 2004 Ted Norhaus and Michael Shellenberger published their seminal essay "The Death of Environmentalism." They argued the environmental movement had become so professionalized and specialized in policy and technical battles, opposing its own narrow agenda to the narrow agendas of other factions, that it was losing relevance and potentially vast mainstream support.

"Environmentalists are putting the technical policy cart before the vision-and-values horse," Nordhaus and Shellenberger wrote. *"If environmentalists hope to become more than a special interest we must start framing our proposals around core American values and start seeing our own values as central to what motivates and guides our politics…. Environmentalists need to tap into the creative worlds of myth-making, even religion, not to better sell narrow and technical policy proposals but rather to figure out who we are and who we need to be."* The essay touched off an international debate on the future of environmental advocacy and progressive politics, which is still underway today.

October 2004, the same month "The Death of Environmentalism" was launched, Garrison Institute's Hudson River Project held its first community event, an Interfaith Sail for the Environment on the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. We identified some 150 diverse faith communities, from Catholic to shamanistic, and gathered many of them for an autumn sail on the River. Some of those on board included ROAR (Religious Orders Along the River) whose members own thousands of acres of property along the Hudson River, COEJL, (Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life), the Masjid Al-Rasheed (Islamic Learning Center) of Beacon, New York, the Mohonk Quaker community and many others. On deck, they discussed shared beliefs and shared priorities for the River, and formed a nucleus of a network of concerned faith communities convening at Hudson River Project events.

This nucleus has since grown to a collaborative network of over 1000 congregations, faith communities, multi-religious, environmental and civic organizations in the Hudson River watershed which have participated in Hudson River Project events.

Starting in 2005 the Hudson River Project conducted a mapping study and organized these contacts into a comprehensive database of religious and environmental groups in the Hudson region from Albany, New York to Newark, New Jersey. The database is an important tool for tracking and staying in touch with this growing community, and it has much more room to grow: in New York State alone, New York Interfaith Power & Light estimates there are 11,000 communities of faith, and over a million self-identified religious individuals, in addition to the wealth of environmental groups in the Hudson Valley.

> *"A comprehensive understanding of the physical and biological functioning of the Hudson Basin as a bioregional community has never been attempted in any significant or sustained manner. Yet the only real hope for the Hudson Community is to see itself within the context of the physical and biological functioning of the tidal river and its tributaries, of the estuary, the bays, the tidal straits, the wetlands, the shorelines and related land formations with the great variety of living forms from the plankton to the sturgeon, from the shire grasses to the forests of the Catskills, from the earthworms to the humans, to our civic communities and to Metropolitan New York; this is precisely the understanding we need if we are to survive in any satisfying manner."*
>
> – Thomas Berry, *The Lower Hudson as a Bioregional Community*

In April 2005, Hudson River Project Director Rev. Patricia Ackerman participated in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's State of the Hudson Summit at Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York, which convened regional environmental leaders. There she heard John Cronin of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, Fran Dunwell of the NYSDEC's Hudson River Estuary Program, Alex Mathiessen of Riverkeeper and others express the conviction that "we can't do business as usual anymore." The limits of the adversarial model, which pitted protectors against polluters in court and legislative battles, were becoming apparent. To be effective, they said, environmental advocacy needed to be understood as a search for common ground, not winner-take-all contest of opposing special interests. Advocates were looking for more holistic approaches to view the health of the Hudson ecosystem and the various communities and interests within it as a whole. They needed ways to communicate effectively with their opposition, bring more diverse stakeholders to the table, and build consensus.

The New York Times' Anthony dePalma interviewed John Cronin and Garrison Institute co-founder Jonathan F. P. Rose about this new line of environmental thought in September 2005: *"'We have to start by redefining what the river is,' said Jonathan F.P.*

Rose, a founder of the institute. Earlier environmental battles were based on the science of stopping pollution, he said, but now the river must be seen as a part of a whole system that includes the communities alongside it and the effects of storm water runoff, sewage discharges and suburban sprawl. Mr. Rose said the bitter confrontations that pitted environmentalists against industry will no longer work."

Fran Dunwell's Hudson River Estuary Program had sought to make a contribution to a more inclusive, consensus-based approach to regional environmental issues by holding public forums thoughout the Hudson River Valley, soliciting input from diverse communities on all sides of environmental issues, and weaving it into a *Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2005-2009*. Dunwell presented the then draft agenda at the State of the Hudson Summit, identifying twelve key issues facing the River and an action steps to mitigate them that would attract broad public support.

Ackerman approached Dunwell about using the twelve action items in the DEC Hudson River action agenda as rough themes for monthly public forums to be held at the Garrison Institute. They would bring diverse communities and leaders, especially diverse faith communities, together with environmentalists and concerned individuals, to articulate shared values and inspire concrete action. Dunwell agreed, and this was the genesis of the Hudson River Project Conversations.

CONVERSATIONS 2005-2006

From September 2005 through August 2006 the Hudson River Project held monthly public conversations with environmental and faith leaders in open dialog with each other and the public. Each event corresponded roughly to the 12 DEC Hudson River action agenda items such as tracking down contaminants, preserving critical habitat, waterfront revitalization, watershed issues and much else, but they weren't simply public hearings.

With the conversations, the Hudson River Project sought to create a new kind of public forum in which advocates and activists, professional environmentalists, faith leaders of all kinds, educators, government staff, civic groups and other diverse constituencies with very different viewpoints would talk to each other productively about environmental values and spirituality as well as pressing issues.

> *"The human heart is waiting to participate in dialogue with the earth. The human soul is poised to recover the language of the sacred that brings us back into contact with the great rhythms of the natural world. The religious traditions can help unlock this language of dialogue with the Earth and for the Earth."* – Mary Evelyn Tucker from her speech at the Earth Dialogues Forum in Lyons, France, 2001

The conversations were deliberately structured in keeping with the etymological sense of "conversation," which in Latin means "the act of living with or keeping company with, manner of conducting oneself in the world" and also has the connotation of "conversion": all residents of the bioregion are stakeholders by virtue of living together; all are part of an indivisible ecosystem in which our individual conduct affects the whole. Coming to view environmentalism not as a clash of narrow special interests but as a collective, inclusive discourse of the entire ecological community does connote a spiritually or ethically based "conversion" from one's own preconceptions.

So the Hudson River Project conversation events sought to encourage receptivity, to help bridge diverse perspectives and appeal to the heart as well as to the intellect. They invited diverse participants to take the sometimes unfamiliar step of being receptive to views that differed from their own, listening deeply, sharing a contemplative exercise.

Beyond just talking and debating, elements of experiential training in contemplative techniques – deep listening, focusing, meditation, bodywork, interfaith prayer – were integrated into each conversation event. Each also featured art and performance by area artists thematizing the Hudson River and contemplation. Jaanika Peerna's videography pieces were shown before each conversation, invoking the River's presence in the meditation hall. Pete Seeger and other musicians sang their Hudson River songs. The shakuhachi solos of Bruce Gremo and clarinet improvisations of David Rothenberg fulfilled the function of music as some Indian classical musicians describe it: to calm the mind and make it susceptible to spiritual influence.

We found that over the course of the year these elements helped make the conversations, which were always marked by a high level of civility, increasingly thoughtful and respectful, and better at welcoming and synthesizing diverse viewpoints. As a result, participants were able to find and articulate common ground and shared values, which we captured in transcripts and distilled into statements of shared values.

The New York Times covered the launch of the conversations in October 2005. "*The idea is at once simple and quite profound*," wrote columnist Peter Appelbome. "*What could be more central to a religious worldview than the questions of preserving the natural environment, which all religions in differing ways see as God's handiwork? And even many environmentalists say what the movement needs now is vision, spirit, not just bloodless science and impassioned advocacy…. Jonathan Rose, a co-founder of the institute, and Patricia Ackerman, its program coordinator, say that this is a particularly propitious time to infuse environmentalism with some of the values of religion and religion with a mission based in the environment. 'The environmental movement has been lacking a moral mission, and the religious movement has been lacking something that connects faith values with action in the world,' Mr. Rose said. 'They're like lovers who have not yet met, but really want to be together.'*"

During 2005-2006 the monthly conversations each attracted audiences of 50 to 200, directly reaching over a thousand people. They brought together scores of religious and environmental organizations throughout the Hudson Valley, nationally known religious and environmental leaders, and artists. Here is a select list naming just a few of the presenters:

- Dr. Andrea Bartoli, Founder of the Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University
- John Cronin of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries
- Fran Dunwell of NYSDEC's Hudson River Estuary Program

- Kim Elleman of the Open Space Institute
- Paul Gorman of the National Interreligious Partnership for the Environment
- Manna Jo Green of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
- Rabia Terri Harris of the Muslim Peace Fellowship
- Kurt Hoelting, Zen Wilderness Guide
- Rev. Fletcher Harper of GreenFaith
- Rabbi Richard Jacobs of the Westchester Reform Temple
- Dean James A. Kowalski of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine
- Abbot John Daido Lori of the Zen Mountain Monastery
- Sister Miriam Therese MacGillis of Genesis Farm
- Alex Matthiessen of Riverkeeper
- Cheryl Rogowski, farmer and MacArthur Fellow
- Pete Seeger
- Peggy Sheppard of West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. (WEACT)
- Ned Sullivan of Scenic Hudson
- Zen teacher Bonnie Myotai Treace
- Rabbi Lawrence Troster of GreenFaith and the Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life
- Rabbi Arthur Waskow of The Shalom Center

Here are some highlights from the twelve conversations, which featured these and other presenters, with examples of how they sought to bridge different sorts of environmental discourse – sacred and secular, scientific and subjective:

September 2005

Presenters included Alex Matthiessen of Riverkeeper, Aaron Mair of Albany's Arbor Hill Environmental Justice Corporation, Fran Dunwell of NYSDEC's Hudson River Estuary Program, the Rev. Fletcher Harper of GreenFaith, moderated by Jonathan F. P. Rose, and featuring musical performance by Pete Seeger and friends.

Dunwell spoke of the Hudson's dominant cultural importance and its long odyssey from a virtually dead river a generation ago to a vital one today. Mair, of African American and Cherokee descent, invoked the perspective of "first nations and forced nations" and their freighted but deep connection to this land. Alex Matthiessen told the story of the childhood experience that made him want to fight for environmental protection when he was nine years old, and the sense of injustice he still carries with him about private polluters who damage environmental resources that belong to the public.

Rev. Fletcher Harper spoke of spiritual and mythological perceptions of sacred rivers such as the River Ganges in India, considered an immutable and healing divine being, though heavily polluted with toxins, and how such subjective lenses can underpin even the work of scientists and activists. "One of the big problems that faces both the environmental movement and the religious community … is that there's not really a terribly strong bridge that's been built between the mythical way of knowing or the religious, spiritual way of knowing and the scientific way of knowing." But, in the case of the Hudson, he perceived the "beginning of a marriage, of a scientific way of understanding the river with a sense of spiritual, emotional renewal."

October 2005

Presenters included Paul Gorman of the National Interreligious Partnership for the Environment, Steve Stanne, NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program, Ned Sullivan of Scenic Hudson, Zen teacher Bonnie Myotai Treace, and Rabbi Lawrence Troster of GreenFaith.

Paul Gorman spoke of his experiences directing the Feast of St. Francis event at the cathedral of St. John the Divine and the way the blessing of the animals in the cathedral brought a startling, moving sense of the sacredness of nature into the edifice of the church. "Who was blessing whom?" he asked. He sees a growing convergence and equivalence between religious values and the imperative to care for the environment, Pope Benedict XVI, who said in his inaugural address, "The external deserts in the world are growing because the internal deserts have become so vast."

Rabbi Troster reminded us of how the Jewish High Holidays grew from harvest festivals and how Jewish scripture teaches reverence for creation as a corollary to reverence for God.

Sullivan cited theologians Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin, who lived in the Hudson Valley invoking a sense of awe of creation, which sustained him in his conservation work.

Stanne spoke of the Atlantic sturgeon, icon of the Hudson, a species as old as dinosaurs whose individuals can live 60 years or more, an animal of "lineage," worthy of reverence.

Bonnie Myotai Treace invoked the spiritual metaphors of the River, of water, flow and impermanence of which we are a part, citing the teaching of Dogen Zengi, "to study thoroughly a single drop, the flowing or non-flowing of a single drop of water, is to instantly realize the ten thousand dharmas."

November 2005

Presenters included architecture professor Jean Gardner of the Parsons School of Design, Kristen Marcell of NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program, painter Shannon Murphy, working to preserve the Ursuline property in Beacon from development, Ryan Palmer of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater and environmental philosopher, author and musician David Rothenberg.

Held at Manhattan's Eco-Metropolis, the event highlighted young people and education as catalysts for social change. Gardner spoke of how a sense of place and environmental awareness depends on self-awareness and self-connection, and how she sought to convey this to architecture students who eventually create our built environments. She argued against conceiving our relationship to the environment as "stewardship," which implies a measure of dominance and control over nature we don't really have – how could we be "stewards" of a tsunami, for example?

Rothenberg spoke of the intractable difficulty of environmental problems we face, and how we need a perspective that makes facing them fun and interesting, a perspective he brings to his music based on birdsong, and to teaching environmental philosophy to engineers.

Marcel described her work seeking broader consensus on the environment across diverse constituencies throughout the state, and posed the question that pervades this work, "what can we learn from the opposing side?"

December 2005

Presenters included John Cronin of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, author and Bard College professor Susan Fox Rogers, John Daido Lori, founder and abbot of the Zen Mountain Monastery, Sister Miriam Therese MacGillis of Genesis Farm, and Peggy Sheppard of West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. (WEACT).

Both MacGillis, the Dominican Sister, and John Cronin, the environmental activist, cited Thomas Berry as inspiration, conveying a sense of awe of creation and the moral dimensions of our place in it. MacGillis spoke of Berry's cosmological sense of "deep time," extending back 13 million years and into the future, the geologic timescale of the River and the watershed in which we are embedded, but of which we are only dimly aware. "We, the River, and all species have a common moment of space/time. Elements that make up the River are the same that make up our bodies," she said. "This coextension with the earth, every aspect, awakens a capacity which is profoundly spiritual."

MacGillis spoke of Berry's cosmological sense of "deep time" and of geological time. She invoked the river and the watershed in which we are embedded, existing in a timescale extending back 13 million years and deep into the future, imparting to us a dim awareness of the deeper timescale in which we too exist.

Daido Lori, who swam in the Hudson as a boy, spoke of the Buddhist tradition of the Diamond Net of Indra, the world as a vast interconnected web with a jewel at each intersection reflecting all the other jewels. "Mutual causality, interdependency; whatever you do to one part of the diamond net, it reverberates throughout the net," he said. The reverberations of fear-based or proscriptive actions, even on behalf of the environment, don't help nature, he added. "What I think helps a lot is falling in love with it, because then you don't need laws or science or fear tactics or religion to take care of something you love well."

Peggy Sheppard reminded us that West Harlem residents are no less embedded in this web of the natural world than anyone else. Love of where they live and their connection to the natural world and the River, even in an urban environment, is the source of values that sustain WEACT's work for environmental protection and environmental justice, whether educating residents about eating PCB-laced fish, building waterfront parks, or fighting polluting projects such as sewage plants that are disproportionately sited in communities of color. She quoted the manifesto written in 1991 at the first People of Color National Environmental Leadership Summit: "We are here to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, to hereby reestablish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our mother Earth."

January 2006

This event featured many presenters and contributors, including among others Shelley Boris of Fresh Company, farmer Jim Cashen, Kim Elleman of the Open Space Institute, Susan Fields of the GreenThumb/NYC Parks and Recreation Department, Sister Mary Ann Garisto of Sisters Hill Farm, restaurateur Peter Hoffman, Ken Kleinpeter of the Glynwood Center, Sean Nolan of PACE University Land Use Law Center, and farmer and caterer Cheryl Rogowski of Rogowski Farm, the first low-income community supported agriculture (CSA) farm in New York. Rogowski won numerous awards for innovative farming and education practices, including a 2003 MacArthur Award, the first to go to a farmer.

This was a dinner event serving local, sustainably produced food, covered in *The New York Times*: *"Nothing works like food to bring people to the table,"* the *Times* reported. *"An estimated 200 people showed up on the grounds of the institute on Jan. 19 to discuss 'The River and the Bounty of Creation' and to taste local farmers' products, like winter root vegetable salad and onion soup."* Speakers raised burning issues of looming overdevelopment endangering farming and arable land, the role of local agriculture in ecological sustainability, the need to preserve open land and farm it sustainably.

February 2006

Presenters included Cassandra Carmichael, Eco-Justice Program Director of the National Council of Churches, author and environmental ethicist David Rothenberg, Rabbi Lawrence Troster of the Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life, and Jonathan F. P. Rose and David Rome of the Garrison Institute.

This was the beginning of a concerted effort to begin crafting a statement of shared values that would unite diverse faith groups and constituencies concerning their commitment to protecting the Hudson bioregion.

David Rothenberg, who worked with Bill McCullough on the Platform for Deep Ecology, gave historical examples of environmental manifestos and inspirational texts, which in a sense are collectively written. The Chief Seattle letter, loosely attributed to him based on an unwritten speech, reimagined for a film in the 1960s and then enshrined in popular culture as ersatz "history" nonetheless struck and inspirational chord for a generation.

Cassandra Carmichael, who grew up in New Orleans, said Hurricane Katrina revealed poverty, racism and "the toxic byproducts of our lifestyle choices," and yet was "our opportunity to explore and experience our connections to one another." A sense of interrelatedness and love of those around her were the values that sustained her environmental work.

Sharon Alpert of the Surdna Foundation spoke of the historical roots and inspirational core the environmental movement had in common with the civil rights movement, and the need to recreate alignment between spiritual values, cultural values, and our values concerning nature and the environment.

March 2006

Presenters included Hudson River watershed experts Carl Etnier, Ph.D., Stone Environmental, Inc., Simon Gruber of the Orange County Decentralized Wastewater Management Project, Kristen Marcel of NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program, hydrogeologist Russell Urban-Mead, and Manna Jo Greene and Ryan Palmer of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater.

This event followed a daylong technical workshop on Hudson River watershed issues at the Garrison Institute featuring experts and environmental leaders. They stayed for an evening conversation about their values and the spiritual dimensions of their work. They agreed on the need to approach local groundwater, stormwater runoff, sewage, drought, and drinking water issues in more holistic ways.

The Journal News in a front-page story reported on the program: *"Environmental advocates said the only way to truly protect the river was to address it in its entirety, including streams, creeks, wetlands, groundwater and other components that make up the overall waterway. But getting the public to think about protecting individual tributaries and to rethink the management of the wastewater and storm water that threaten them won't be easy…. More riverfront and nearby inland housing… more offices and shopping malls…bring more possibilities for riverbank erosion and for the swift runoff of rainwater instead of its slow absorption into aquifers. They bring the addition of septic systems and of drinking-water wells that tap the same aquifer… Failing septic systems' contents can enter aquifers, wells, streams and creeks that empty into the Hudson…. Sewage-treatment plants throughout the region have aged and need expensive replacement. Many of these plants empty directly into the Hudson."*

Solutions for each of these problems exist – better septic systems, different drainage designs, new infrastructure. But, the experts said, we weren't yet embracing them. They variously drew inspiration from Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, Quakerism, Buddhist ethics, Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethic* and Socrates' *daimon,* but they all agreed that protecting our dwindling water resources at a time of looming development depended on shared values – waking up to a wider sense of common interest and common responsibility that transcended individual homes, municipalities or lifetimes, and viewed the health of the watershed as an indivisible whole.

April, 2006

Presenters included Katie Dolan of The Nature Conservancy, Rev. Fletcher Harper of GreenFaith, Rabia Terri Harris of the Muslim Peace Fellowship, Rabbi Richard Jacobs of the Westchester Reform Temple, and James A. Kowalski, Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Harris spoke of disagreement among Muslims in America over which way to face when praying to Mecca – northeast is the direction of the shortest vector, a circle route around the top of the globe and down, though some imagine a flat grid and think of Mecca as southeast of us. "We have in our scripture and in our religious tradition all sorts of valuable, precious teachings, which we have turned into flat maps. We have to expand our intuition from two dimensions to three dimensions," she said.

Jacobs interpreted the verse from Leviticus, "The earth is mine." Notwithstanding two-dimensional grids of deeds and boundaries indicating otherwise, we do not truly own property or have dominion over the earth itself. We must relearn how to simply be part of it, observing the Sabbath, taking hiatus from our preoccupation with manipulating and dominating it.

Kowalski cited the Ash Wednesday prayer *we have a wanton disregard for those who will come after us.* "It's a magnificent prayer. We only use it one day a year because it maybe scares the hell out of us," he said. "But we ought to listen to it at least that one time." He spoke of inconvenient religious teachings about responsibility, compassion and humility being vulnerable to distortion and cooptation, especially today.

Yet at the same time, Dolan responded, the Evangelical movement and other religious denominations have found the wisdom to begin to address global warming and green their congregations.

May 2006

Presenters included Rev. Fletcher Harper of GreenFaith, Kurt Hoelting, Zen Wilderness Guide, and Rabbi Lawrence Troster, Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL).

This was the capping event of "Meeting the Sacred in Creation," an interfaith environmental retreat for clergy and other faith leaders, which had taken place over the previous several days. The retreat leaders and some of the participants then shared their experience with the public in an evening conversation.

Hoelting, who leads contemplative wilderness retreats along the Alaskan coast, described his work as "what seems like a new attempt, but [is] really a very, very old process of connecting place with soul, place with presence, with human presence, in all of its manifestations…the deep spiritual continuity that we have with the places we inhabit, and which now is so much at risk in so many parts of our world and our culture. How do we even begin to knit those back together?" Hoelting's own modalities for this reweaving are photography, writing and contemplative experience in and about nature.

Through discussion with retreat participants and the larger audience, poems, excerpts from the film Hoelting co-created, "Deep Presence," time in silence in the woods on the Garrison Institute grounds, and shakuhachi music by flutist Bruce Gremo, the evening evoked a sense of place and presence to the natural world, encompassing both the joy and grief of its impermanence, even its environmental degradation and loss, within a sense of the sacredness of creation.

June 2006

Presenters included Frank Martucci and Ned Sullivan of Scenic Hudson**,** Carol Ash of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission**,** Rev. Charles Colwell of the The Center for Jewish-Christian-Muslim Understanding in Irvington, and Kathleen Savolt of the BECZAK Environmental Education Center in Yonkers.

Held at a senior center in Irvington's riverfront Scenic Hudson Park, on land Scenic Hudson preserved from development, the conversation discussed preservation issues and waterfront revitalization in aesthetic, philosophical and spiritual terms, via Hudson River

School painter George Inness' "God-haunted landscapes" and the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson ("The landscape is a missionary,") Emmanuel Swedenborg ("Nothing is to be found in the created universe which is not a correspondence with something in man and woman"), Thomas Berry ("The human venture depends absolutely on…reverence and joy in the earth") and Robert Browning ("Earth's crammed with heaven. Every common bush is afire with God").

Waterfront preservation vs. development was also approached more concretely, with a discussion of the pending New York State Community Preservation Act and specific preservation campaigns, sewer overflows, transit issues, and in particular the way the September 11, 2001 attacks had changed and galvanized our sense of place in downstate New York. In the days following 9/11, a five-year old knelt at Scenic Hudson Park to pray for the fallen, and thousands flocked to the Palisades Parks.

Rev. Colwell concluded that the spiritual/emotional and the physical dimensions the Hudson landscape were one and the same: "There's only one unified reality and all of it belongs to God, so my views of Scenic Hudson Park are not just about the physical property, but they are also profoundly spiritual – every bush in this park, every wave that laps against the shore, every cry of children, every bounce of the basketball."

July 2006

Presenters included Dr. Andrea Bartoli, Founder of the Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University, Patricia A. Daly, OP, Executive Director of the Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment, Deacon John Kelly of the St. Gregory Barbarigo Parish, Garnerville, Ibrahim Abdil- Mu'id Ramey of the Climate Crisis Coalition, Rabia Terri Harris of the Muslim Peace Fellowship, Rabbi Arthur Waskow of The Shalom Center, Lisa Rainwater of Riverkeeper, and Jim Steets of Entergy Northeast, owner/operator of the Indian Point nuclear plants on the shore of the Hudson.

This could be called the acid test of the Hudson River Project conversation methodology – convening Riverkeeper and Entergy, entrenched opponents in the divisive debate over the future of the Indian Point nuclear reactors, together with a distinguished conflict resolution expert and interfaith leaders.

The New York Times described the setting this way: *"The combatants had all but poked their fingers into each other's eyes over the years, at town-hall meetings and in public discussions held by regulatory agencies. The debate between Entergy Nuclear Northeast,*

which runs the Indian Point nuclear power plant on the Hudson River in Buchanan, N.Y., and the environmental group Riverkeeper seemed to be going nowhere. Stances were solidified, distrust was deep. But when the call came to an Entergy spokesman to have yet another debate with his biggest nemesis — this one at a convent [Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining] — how could he refuse?"

The event was also previewed on New York Public Radio's "Brian Lehrer Show," with a lengthy on-air conversation between Bartoli, Rainwater and Steets.

Each side invoked ethical and spiritual precepts to support its position, Entergy citing a moral imperative to keep the plant running to meet energy needs and fight foreign oil dependence and carbon emissions, and Riverkeeper citing a moral imperative to close it to protect the tens of millions living nearby from leaks, accidents and plausible terrorist attack. Each made their living from pursuing these arguments. Could they find common ground?

Deep listening, contemplative exercises, music, poetry, scripture, sacred space and ritual were all brought to bear. Bartoli, a veteran of negotiations in conflict zones, saw signs of hope and was impressed by the civility of the exchange, the willingness of the parties to accept the other as principled, and to keep talking. A large turnout and wide media coverage helped inject these elements into the wider public debate.

One longtime activist working to close Indian Point in the audience wrote about the experience this way:

"It was interesting to see how deep listening could be applied to something as polarized as Indian Point. Presenters were in a semi circle in front of the audience. After each presentation or comment there was a small chime followed by silence. Silence was broken by the same sound and the next comment was offered. There was no rebuttal… Clergy followed the music with convocation. Those who had brought river water from their particular part of the Hudson were invited to come up and pour it into a beautiful crystal bowl. It was noted how easily all the water combined… It was an innovative beginning that cast aside the normal prejudices for an Indian Point exchange. This was not an attempt to counter fact with fact. In its own way it seemed to work on a deeper level. Everyone was required to listen respectfully to the voice of others and a silence between voices was enforced so that there was a brief time to reflect on what was said. This is an invaluable technique that short circuits automatic responses and can move dialog to a more meaningful place. This was an experiment in seeking a new and different way to approach a thorny real world problem using the container of sacred space…it was not at

all adversarial…. As I understand it, the point is to be able to listen to all viewpoints with equanimity and compassion without getting caught up in old patterns of response. Certainly the evening reinforced my growing conviction that hurling facts and counter facts about will not close the plant. I suspect it is a matter of deeper values."

August 2006

With Rev. Clare Butterfield of Faith in Place as the keynote speaker and the Walkabout Clearwater Chorus as musical presenters, this final conversation took stock of and celebrated the work of the previous eleven, and presented its written product, a draft version of a Statement of Shared Values.

Developed by a committee of some 20 volunteers close to the project, representing clergy, monastics, lay leaders, environmental activists, labor advocates, state government, media professionals and business, the statement distilled the presentations, audience responses and small group discussions of a year's worth of conversations, painstakingly transcribed and read closely to identify and articulate the common threads unifying an extremely diverse discourse.

The result was read aloud by volunteers and distributed in written form to participants to sign and take to their communities. The Statement continued to evolve during the next year and was formally launched as *The Hudson River Compact: Our Shared Nature* on Earth Day, April 22, 2007.

CONSULTATIONS 2006-2007

The Hudson River Project entered a new phase in 2006-2007, moving from broad-based public conversations to honing, disseminating and implementing the take-home messages gleaned from them, and consolidating our work with the growing network of congregations and faith groups that had connected with the Project. It represented a movement beyond the rich conversation we had started, to concrete action steps congregations would take.

Our Shared Nature

We formally wrote up our statement of shared values and commitments to action, begun during the 2005-2006 conversations – a declaration of both ecological and spiritual principles widely held in common across the diverse faith and civic communities of the Hudson Valley and concrete actions that signatories will undertake to benefit the environment.

Some 20 representatives of religious, environmental and civic stakeholder contributed to the careful crafting of the sign-on statement, including:

- Patricia Ackerman, Hudson River Project director
- Nancy Alden, journalist
- Jim Cashen, farmer
- James Davis of the Wittenberg Center for Alternative Resources
- Sr. Carol De Angelo of Sisters of Charity and ROAR (Religious Organizations on the River)
- Nancy Erts, OP of the Mariandale Retreat Center, Dominican Sisters of Hope
- Jean Fallon, MM of the Maryknoll Sisters
- George Klein of the Sierra Club
- Radio host Robyn Leary
- Susan Leifer of the Sierra Club
- Kristin Marcell of the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program
- Sean Nolon of Pace University Land Use Law Center
- Migrant worker health coordinator James O'Barr of Hudson River Healthcare
- Fred and Anne Osborn

Our Shared Nature

A Transformational Ecology Compact For The Hudson

Earth Day 2007

We, the people of the Hudson River Valley, believe that we are called to a mutually enhancing relationship with Earth and all communities of life. We know that we must change our actions as human beings and communities to protect the fragile environment we love and share. This is the only way to preserve and restore the bioregion we call home for future generations and all life.

This is an urgent call for visionary sustainability from the precipice of potential extinction. While we continue to grieve the loss of our fragile environment to human acts of devastation, over-consumption, pollution, global warming and climate change, we choose to have a new vision of hope. We believe that destructive human behaviors can be transformed.

As members of diverse religious and environmental communities of the Hudson River Valley, over 300 miles from headwaters to ocean, we are united in our awe of life. Our survival as a species depends on a renewed understanding of Earth based on interdependence.

Therefore, we declare that the land and waters of the Hudson River Valley bioregion are unique, precious and irreplaceable. We actively commit to preserving, protecting and restoring this region. Individually and collectively, we agree to live and act according to the following principles:

1
The Earth is a sacred trust.

2
We rely on the resources of Earth for our lives.

3
Earth does not belong to humans alone. We are but temporary stewards of the communities of life.

4
We will change our dominating relationship to Earth to one of respect and interdependence.

5
We will review and evaluate our actions to see how our lifestyles impact our home and our world.

6
We commit to an ethical and equitable rule of life to guide us to share resources more sustainably and seek justice.

7
We will shift our daily actions and financial practices to be environmentally responsible, acknowledging they may require more effort in our day-to-day lives.

8
We agree to build a society that will sustain the whole Earth community in health, abundance and safety, without further sacrificing the natural world.

9
We will join local citizen networks and dedicate ourselves and our communities to consistent, positive social, spiritual and environmental change.

10
We seek to be part of a movement of humans uniting on behalf of the Earth community to build a local and global vision of sustainability.

11
We agree to seek what has been lost, restore our natural resources and maintain our communities, wasting nothing.

12
We will celebrate all efforts already underway and support the continuing creation of new networks and collaborations.

Please join others by signing on to this statement at www.garrisoninstitute.org.

GARRISON INSTITUTE
14 Mary's Way, Rt. 9D at Glenclyffe, Garrison, NY 10524 Tel: 845.424.4800 www.garrisoninstitute.org

- Lisa Rainwater of Riverkeeper
- Edna Sussman of Action for Tomorrow's Environment and the Westchester County Global Warming Task Force
- Rabbi Lawrence Troster of GreenFaith

Drawing on the comprehensive database we compiled of religious and environmental groups, we reached out to clergy and other religious leaders throughout the Hudson Valley and worked concertedly with them to hone the statement, sign onto it and disseminate and implement it in their congregations and communities.

The statement was subsequently launched on Earth Day, 2007 under the title *Our Shared Nature: A Transformational Ecology Compact for the Hudson.* Printed versions were distributed to area congregations, and an email campaign asking for online signatures was run in conjunction with display ads in daily newspapers. To date some 175 have signed on, primarily congregations but also civic and environmental groups, and even municipal governments and businesses.

Quarterly Consultation Events

Meanwhile, beginning in December, 2006, we convened quarterly Spirit & Ecology Consultations with area faith leaders, addressing both the theoretical and practical dimensions of spirit and ecology.

These efforts were all focused on building a growing movement of diverse faith communities with a common values-based or spiritually motivated commitment to environmental action, including "greening" their congregations and wider communities.

The verb "to green" is a neologism meaning to reflect on how values and spiritual beliefs and practices square with one's ecological attitudes and practices, to reexamine and change environmentally destructive or unsustainable behavior, to take appropriate, tangible steps to understand and reduce or eliminate environmental impacts in one's own house of worship and to advocate similar measures in the wider community.

We have been fortunate to have the colleagueship in this work of thoughtful, dedicated people who volunteered on the Hudson River Project Steering Committee, served on the writing committee that produced the Statement, and addressed and attended the quarterly consultation events.

Hundreds of area clergy and leaders of highly diverse faith communities participated in the consultations, some new to the discourse of spirit and ecology and beginning to contemplate greening their congregations, others already well along the path with a knowledge base to share. They came to network, share ideas and seek new information and resources. Here is a sample list naming just a few of the participants:

- Rev. Linda Anderson of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Catskills
- Brother Scott Borden of the Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY
- Joyce Bresler of the Jewish Peace Fellowship in Nyack, NY
- Philip Carr-Harris of the Dutchess County Interfaith Council
- Matt Dunbar of the Interfaith Center of New York
- Mike Ignatowski of the Hudson Valley Network of Spiritual Progressives
- Rabbi Miriam Margles of Kehillat Lev Shalom in Woodstock, NY
- Lucille McEwen of Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement
- Thich Tri Hoang of Chuang-Yen Monastery in Carmel, NY
- Erika Tsoukenelsi of the Ananda Ashram in Monroe, NY

Spirit and Ecology, December 2006

About a hundred faith and environmental leaders attended this first consultation. Presentations and discussions highlighted both the spiritual and practical dimensions of environmental awareness and action in faith communities.

Diverse spiritual traditions and faith communities already share a broad set of spiritual and ecological values, such as mindful consumption, reverence for life and non-violence, all of which have profound ecological implications. The opportunity exists for faith leaders to articulate how shared beliefs inform our shared relationship to the environment, and to take this message into their communities in a systematic way, including through dissemination of *Our Shared Nature: A Transformational Ecology Compact for the Hudson*.

Participants spoke of care for the earth as a common denominator for all faiths and spiritual teachings, transcending social, economic and ethnic divides. Without subsuming religious or cultural differences, it delineates what some called a "commonality of souls" or sense of communion, anchored to a deeply shared sense of place. Bringing to conscious awareness our shared place in the natural environment, and the way our behavior affects it (through carbon emissions, for example) deepens our appreciation of our own interconnectedness with one another as participants in the wider ecological community, each of whose actions affect all the other participants.

This sense of communion also presents opportunities to connect diverse faith communities to each other, for example through interfaith study forums on spirituality and ecology, or through new forms of shared worship. Invoking the work of Thomas Berry, Bede Griffiths and Joanna Macy, many called for new theological paradigms and forms of worship to obviate the old sense of religious hierarchy, "dominion" and "stewardship" over the earth, in favor of equality, equanimity, inclusiveness, communion.

This has particular implications for environmental justice. Historically, the burdens of environmental damage, including loss of open space, quality of life impacts and health effects, have been borne disproportionately by communities of color, low-income communities and urban areas. Now the work, expense, leadership roles, sacrifices and benefits involved in protecting and restoring the Hudson bioregion must be shared equitably. Faith communities have a role in advocating this.

In general, religious leaders, the participants said, have a dual role in educating their communities about environmental responsibility and modeling behavioral change. They can do it from the pulpit and in pastoral work, encouraging their communities to change beliefs, attaining greater personal awareness of the spiritual dimensions of ecology, and to practice those beliefs, changing behavior. They can also do it by supporting and taking concrete steps towards reduced environmental impacts in their own institutions, setting an example for the community at large.

Many faith groups reported that adding yet another priority demand on their limited time and budget resources risked overwhelming them. On the other hand, they recognized global warming and other environmental challenges loom so large that they increasingly demand a moral response. Although they usually require an initial investment, greening measures can often save congregations money in the long term. Achieving the sense that reducing, offsetting or eliminating negative environmental impacts is really possible and within our grasp can actually help faith communities feel more secure, optimistic, and empowered.

Patrice Courtney Strong of Mid Hudson Energy Smart in Kingston, New York gave a detailed keynote presentation that showed how churches and other local institutions in the Hudson Valley accessed NYSERDA state programs and funding, greened their existing operations and/or used green building and renovation methods, and actually saved money by doing it. Energy conservation methods range from replacing incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents to replacing appliances with EnergyStar products. NYSERDA energy audits ($100-400, reimbursable) can help physical plants identify the "low hanging fruit" of methods offering the greatest benefit for the lowest cost (or the highest return, since some save money over existing practices).

Participants received a Hudson River Action Plan compiled by the Garrison Institute, listing additional resources for assessing and reducing energy consumption, renewable generation, recycling, eliminating toxic substances, reducing greenhouse gases, tree planting and sustainable land use. Individuals shared their experiences and additional suggestions for greening approaches, from joining the "green cemetery" movement to various gardening proposals**.**

Green Planning and Green Communities, February 2007

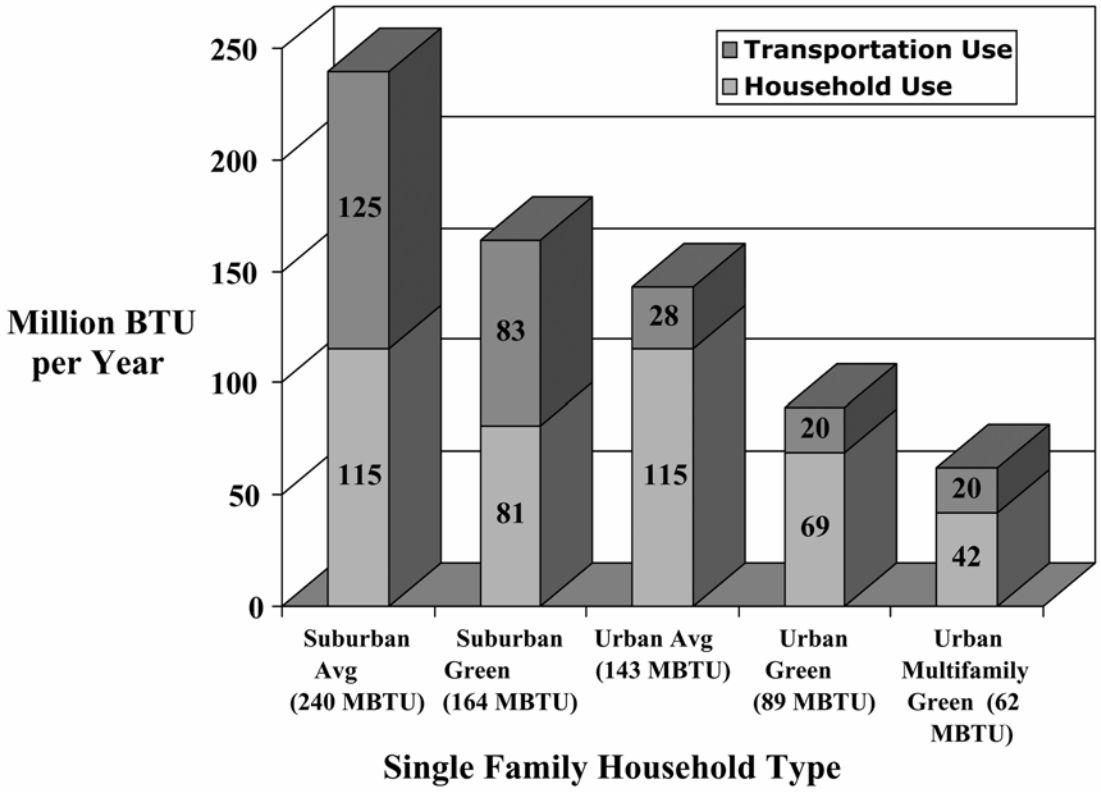
Ten days after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changes released its sobering report, roughly one hundred faith leaders braved snowy weather to attend the second Hudson River Project consultation, on "Green Planning and Green Communities." "Energized by the growing consensus that global warming may be a danger of biblical proportions," reported *The Journal News*, "religious leaders from up and down the Hudson Valley traded ideas about how to use their pulpits and congregations to save the heaven and the earth. They talked about everything from switching to energy-efficient light bulbs in their houses of worship to bringing religious values to their communities' normally confrontational planning meetings."

Garrison Institute co-founder Jonathan F. P. Rose gave the keynote presentation, in which he argued that while the "low hanging fruit" of improving one's own facility with such things as compact fluorescent light bulbs was an important way to begin the greening process, by far the most fruitful energy and emissions savings would come from changing broad settlement patterns, making better use of our area's extensive mass transit system, and other big-picture planning and development changes. This would entail, among other things, revising zoning and planning codes to encourage greater density in train station villages, while lowering density outside of them to preserve open space.

Rose challenged faith communities to get involved in these broader planning issues, arguing that community planning was fundamentally an expression of values. "We require a technical environmental impact statement for new development projects, but we don't require a values impact statement," he said. "Yet all public spaces project a kind of values grid, like the town square, with its church, court, town hall, school and library. We should ask, what are the values projected by a strip mall or a subdivision? What are our own values? What is being built in our communities that enhances or undermines them? You can and should advocate building and planning that reflects our values today."

One of the key values expressed in future development should be community over hyperindividualism: less sprawl, less driving, more walking and mass transit, and more density. High density developments are often controversial in the Hudson Valley, but building more density in the right places in an attractive way can actually enhance communities. Rose's presentation gave many examples and images of actual building projects in the Hudson Valley which struck the right balance: expanding existing buildings by building up, not out, reclaiming brownfields, putting denser developments within walking distance to workplaces, schools, town centers, mass transit, etc. With a wealth of preserved land, the Hudson Valley today presents many opportunities to in-fill strategic areas with denser development while preserving and connecting areas of open space.

Density is also one of the keys to reducing energy consumption and mitigating climate change. Between driving around and running the household, the average suburban single-family house dweller uses 240 million BTUs of energy a year. Change her light



bulbs, build her house with green design and materials, and exchange her SUV for a hybrid, and usage can drop to around 164 million BTUs per year. But urban dwellers are down to an average 143 million BTUs per year already, without any greening measures,

just by virtue of density. Green their housing, and their usage drops to 89 million BTUs per year – 62 million if the housing is multi-family, or about one quarter of what the typical suburban single family house dweller uses now.

Many scientists say that to preserve a habitable climate, we must restrict global average temperature rise to two degrees Celsius, which means reducing US carbon emissions 80% by midcentury. As the Hudson Valley population and development pressures increase, our communities will inevitably change. We have the opportunity to manage that change by adopting planning and development policies that can reduce domestic energy use by about three quarters, building denser but highly livable communities that are environmentally responsible. This would be a far-reaching expression of spiritual and moral values – emphasizing community, taking responsibility for our emissions and combating climate change for future generations.

Faith leaders responded strongly to this argument and to the positive, achievable vision of our area's future it projects. They asked for a version of the presentation to give to local planning boards and expressed enthusiasm for the idea of "values impact statements" to accompany environmental impact statements for new building projects.

They also discussed their own work with their local communities on greening issues. At least one clergyman from Westchester serves on his town planning board and encouraged his colleagues to do so: "Just volunteer for anything in the local government, and sooner or later, they will ask you to be on the planning board." Other participants spoke of their experiences advocating energy efficient architectural standards, supporting local food and farm networks, sustainable livelihood development such as the Cool Communities initiative, municipal zoning sustainability plans such as Philipstown 20/20, and creating affordable housing projects which also afford greening opportunities, such as the Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement.

Earth Day Café, April 2007

Participants from very diverse area faith communities celebrated Earth Day Eve with a "world café"-type forum. The world café format involves a plenary presentation of some probing, even Socratic questions with far-reaching implications, followed by small groups discussing the answers and bringing their discussions back to the larger group.

The plenary presentation was given by Melissa Everett, executive director of Sustainable Hudson Valley, in the form of what she called a "sacred PowerPoint," surveying current

information about climate change and efforts to combat it, and asking some deep questions about human responses and non-responses to it. She quoted Joanna Macy and Molly Brown's recent book, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World*: "Yet of all the dangers we face, from climatic change to nuclear wars, none is so great as the deadening of our response." Everett asked of the gathering, what are you most afraid of? What gives you hope? What is happening now that you find exciting? What resources can you offer in abundance?

The prevailing fear expressed was for the coming generations, and the threat of failing in our responsibility to bequeath them a viable world. But participants also shared in detail their hopes and perceptions of positive changes underway: for example, that corporations were increasingly adopting sustainability standards and making money at it, that mainstream media outlets were increasing focused on going "green," that young people today are more conscious and competent concerning environmental issues than adults, that religious leaders are increasingly seeing environmental stewardship as a moral imperative and a deep part of their spiritual mission.

They pointed to the resilience of nature struggling to bounce back from the effects of pollution, even in degraded environments like Onondaga Lake, known as the most polluted lake in the United States. They cited heroes, ranging from visionaries such as Teilhard de Chardin to contemporary indigenous leaders such as Evo Morales, president of Bolivia. As they shared fears and hopes, they also spoke of courage as the quality that bridged the two.

Here are some excerpts from the plenary dialogue about finding effective spiritual language and conceptual frameworks to address today's environmental crisis, each paragraph representing a different voice in this diverse gathering:

> "We teach young people that we have never gone beyond the carrying capacity of the planet. So we are in uncharted territory now, and perhaps it will tap an unused part of our consciousness. We have never been tested before on this level, so I hold out hope that our true nature will be revealed to us."
>
> "Religion and spiritual traditions provide identity and purpose for human beings. The earthrise image is not a picture, but an expression of human consciousness – who we are and what we're about. This is the only sacred image that means anything anymore. All the other sacred images we cherish, without disrespecting them, are not in the same category of mattering. Then how do we articulate the spiritual tradition this image puts in front of us? I talked at a previous meeting about the importance of finding a new theological or spiritual or religious language that can begin to capture what this is about. Our old language doesn't do it. We all have diverse concepts that essentially point to the same sorts of things. Is this planetary vision going to give us a new language?"

"We don't necessarily need new language. We have the word 'unity' -- recognizing our unity as humanity and our unity with God. We are using the word 'consultation' – inclusive discussion of how to create a sustainable world, what will create change so the big guys aren't the only ones talking. We have the word 'education' of all people on all levels about protecting the environment and not wasting resources. The most important word is 'justice' -- acting justly in all areas of our life. We must be able to act with fairness."

"Another word is 'embodiment' and exploration of what this body is -- cross-cultural notions of how you answer the question of where your body stops and the outside world begins. 'Incarnation' is another -- what would it mean to say there is God in this flesh? Each should explore deeply in one's own tradition, and bring that to the table."

"We live in a paradigm of patriarchal western tradition. But there are many others. People in indigenous Australia talked for many years about how man would go to the moon and see the earthrise. There are deep traditions we have almost erased but not quite – they are still there. Every race, culture and time speaks about caring for the earth. We might take a moment to breathe, looks listen and rediscover for all our relations."

"Native Americans had plenty of words for this. One is *Pattaconk*, or "waterfall where we should pray," a real place right off Route 209. People went there to meditate and become one with the spirit of water. A waterfall is of human size, unlike the Hudson, and that's where you go to pray, to relate in a human way to nature. For example, trees are our best friends, we breathe opposite air to theirs. Indigenous issues aren't primarily about race and land rights, but primarily about sacred knowledge. Some of us are direct descendents. Our tradition teaches how to communicate with the earth to live on it without damaging it. There is not a lot of this training available in churches and synagogues. Yet the roots of Christianity too are largely indigenous. This information is hanging by a thread but is not totally lost. Indigenous people have hung onto it, faced death for it. The knowledge is available and it is very ancient. It teaches, unless you have a connection with the earth your spirit life will not be rich, like a tree with no roots."

"This is a room full of teachers. We each have the ability to influence others. We must each speak from our traditions, but from the place where they call for action. Each of our traditions has a list of to-dos – commandments, pillars, ethical precepts, obligations. This is what you must do, says your tradition. We should reframe that calling in terms of what we must do for the environment. I'm Jewish so I want to talk to my students in Jewish terms: 'We have this mitzvah…' We are all principled people – we must bring our principles into language that can make a difference in this environmental crisis."

The discussion of language and imagery took place as the Hudson River Project's sign-on statement articulating shared values and actions was launched. The first printed copies of *The Hudson River Compact: Our Shared Nature* were distributed to participants in the Earth Day Café event, who conducted an antiphonal reading of its text, and took the printed copies back to their congregations. The Compact was also launched more widely with display ads in area daily newspapers the following day, Sunday April 22, Earth Day.

The Compact's signatories attest to the emergence and diversity of a regional movement for transformational ecology, and continued dissemination will attract more congregations, civic groups and individuals to join it by signing on. To date some 175 have done so, representing a diverse mix of faith communities, including lay leaders and monastics, as well as environmental and civic groups, educators, farmers, municipal and state government entities, and many others. An updated list of signatories is posted on the Garrison Institute website, www.garrisoninstitute.org – click on the Hudson River Compact link.

The launch of the Compact was one hopeful sign among many others participants cited as evidence of a shift in awareness and growth in opportunities for leaders and members of faith communities to make a difference. Participants described their involvement in community supported agriculture, advocating regulatory changes to remove the disincentives for utilities to encourage energy conservation, creating and disseminating children's books portraying role models who were stewards of nature, organizing academic conferences on Native American traditions and the environment, conducting doctoral research comparing the convergence of religion and ecology in the Hudson Valley and Bhutan, and much else.

When asked what they planned to do differently as a result of this discussion and their contact with the growing movement for transformational ecology in the Hudson watershed, their answers were passionate, practical and diverse: buy carbon offsets, work to affect comprehensive plans at the municipal level, reorient a planned church addition as a green building project, hold a conference of religious organizations on land use, support CSAs, local farms and community and school gardens and many other ideas.

REPLICATION 2007-2008

The Hudson River Project broke new ground at its inception. Starting in 2004, it began mapping environmental and religious groups in the Hudson Valley and bringing them together in special events. In 2005-2006, it reached out to thousands of religious people, environmentalists and concerned citizens via inclusive, monthly public conversations that bridged spiritual and ecological perspectives. In the process, it discovered and articulated much common ground amid the great diversity of these communities and this region.

In 2006-2007, the Project distilled these discussions into the statement of shared values and action commitments *"Our Shared Nature: A Transformational Ecology Compact for the Hudson,"* and disseminated it to congregations and communities throughout the Hudson Valley. It convened area clergy and faith leaders at networking events to fuel the growth of a new transformational ecology movement. It built a network of congregations and faith groups committed to the principles and actions articulated in the Compact and creating measurable change, from greening their own operations to working with wider communities on planning and other broad issues.

The current opportunity is to implement and replicate these ideas in concrete ways, building this nascent spiritual/ecological regional community into a self-sustaining, movement in the Hudson Valley and beyond.

During the 2006-2007 consultations, participants reported new initiatives inspired by their involvement with the Hudson River Project. For example, the Mariandale Retreat Center, on the Hudson River in Ossining, New York, is run by the Dominican Sisters of Hope. They signed and distributed the Hudson River Project Statement, then launched a new project to develop and implement a "land ethic" incorporating principles of spirit and ecology, collaborating with other Dominican institutions on the East Coast. A minister in Ridgefield, Connecticut was inspired to organize a retreat for the community's planning, zoning and town board officials to rethink the town's environmental goals and policies.

Scores of other area congregations are doing more than just listening to environmental sermons. Many held screenings of "An Inconvenient Truth"; many started conversations and committee work on greening their own facilities and implementing conservation ethics in their personal lives and their wider communities.

Writing in the recent issue of Yale Divinity School journal *Reflections,* Garrison Institute co-founder Jonathan F.P. Rose emphasized the pluralistic nature of this growing movement, both in terms of the diversity of faith communities involved, and how faith and environmental groups can stimulate each other:

"Amid growing faith-based environmental efforts around the country, a distinguishing feature of the Hudson River Project is its multi-faith constituency. Ministers are learning … from rabbis, rabbis are learning…from ministers…. One of the key lessons…is that the most effective way to bring together religion and environment is to fully engage the power of each. The goal is not to find a middle ground, but rather, through deep spiritual engagement, find a new view that underlies both fields. The [Garrison] Institute's dialogues were informed by ecological science, but the science was framed in a way that touched the heart."

Whether providing relief services in Hurricane Katrina's wake or distribution systems for resources to fight malaria in sub-Saharan Africa, congregations and other faith-based organizations are increasingly demonstrating their capacity to move important issues of conscience and create positive social change.

At a time when consciousness of climate change and other environmental threats is awakening globally, faith groups are potentially key actors in the effort to translate environmental concerns into effective, transformative action. They are the main channels for reconnecting environmental issues with widely held values and spiritual beliefs, and can appeal to a broad public on the basis of those values and beliefs to motivate real-world change.

The Hudson River Project's work has put the Hudson Valley in the vanguard of the world's faith communities poised to realize their potential role as key actors on environmental issues. That they do so is not only critically important regionally, but also meaningful as a replicable model for other parts of the United States and the rest of the world.

Having helped convene area faith groups and initiate this movement, in the future the Hudson River Project hopes to act as a clearing house, a monitor, a support system and a networking home for it, and to encourage its replication throughout the region and beyond. Our work with area congregations, deepening explorations of spirit and ecology, undertaking practical steps of greening and community advocacy and wider dissemination of the Hudson River Project Statement continues. But going forward, the

main impetus for social change must come from congregations and congregants themselves.

To that end, the Hudson River Project in 2007-2008 plans to work with key partners including Sustainable Hudson Valley, the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program and others to cultivate and expand the community base of the regional transformational ecology movement. We will co-sponsor public forums and trainings for congregations and communities, offering local religious leaders and community members contemplative and practical tools for becoming more effective contributors to solutions for climate change and other pressing problems.

These events will be distinctly multi-generational, multi-cultural and multi-religious, reaching further into our diverse communities than the Hudson River Project has done so far. They will offer help with "greening" houses of worship and wider communities, as well as affecting larger policy issues such as community planning. And they will draw from the collective wisdom of our regional community, continuing to explore the deep connections between this pragmatic work and contemplative practice.

We will continue to disseminate *"Our Shared Nature: A Transformational Ecology Compact for the Hudson"* in faith communities and via "old" and "new" media, and in general will foster the growth of the transformational ecology movement in our region, documenting its activity, sharing resources and experiences, and facilitating shared worship and other collaborations. All our current and planned activities are aimed at broadening and deepening the growth, impact and diversity of this movement as it matures.

For more information on upcoming Hudson River Project programs and events, contact:

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