

The Morris Sesquicentennial

The village of Morris is celebrating its 150th anniversary of incorporation June 13–14th, 2020. The BVA is excited to be a partner in this celebration. The theme for the Sesquicentennial is: Honor The Past, Act In The Present, Plan For The Future. Everyone is welcome.

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*The BVA is a 501(c)(3)
that serves the communities
within the watershed of the
Butternut Creek*

THE CURRENT

Winter
2020

Protecting and Conserving the Quality of Life in the Butternut Valley

What is the Butternut Valley Alliance?

This question is often on my mind as I talk with members of the community.

In its simplest form the BVA is a membership organization encompassing the Butternut Creek watershed. The BVA strives to protect the environmental qualities of the watershed, promote sustainable economic development, support farmland preservation, and to do so with an eye to conserving the historical beauty and history of all our communities. While those goals are big, difficult, audacious, and aspirational, they don't really make clear what the BVA does day to day.

Every day, members of the BVA are working to engage people in a discussion about what we want for our community — up and down the valley — and through this dialog to develop activities to meet the goals outlined above.

The annual Butternut Creek Float,

June 14th this year, is one such program. We host the canoe trip to get friends out on the creek so that they can see our valley from its namesake, slow down and really value the resource we have in our creek. BVA is focused on making sure that our beautiful environment stays pristine because it's a big part of what makes the Butternut Valley a great place to live, work, and play. Getting folks out on the river is one of the ways we build support for our community

When the BVA hosted Rene Elliot to share his knowledge about the history of Linn Tractors, manufactured in Morris, it wasn't just because we think Linn Tractors are cool, although they are. We did it to connect people to the history of the Butternut Valley as we inexorably march into the future. The lecture drew 65 attendees — new individuals who might otherwise not have been familiar with the organization, our shared goals

and values or activities we are undertaking in pursuit of those goals.

For instance, BVA is working with DEC, Otsego Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Otsego County Conservation Association to create a Butternut Creek watershed management plan — a voluntary guide to assist our communities with economic development and resource management. The plan will also allow us to document the needs and issues of our communities, which will help them qualify for grants to fund projects that will improve our communities.

True to its mission, this project gets the residents of our watershed talking about their needs, fears and expectations. While the watershed management plan has an environmental protection component to it, it is about much more than that. It is also about economic de-

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30 Miles {
Length of the watershed

4,400 People {
Approximate population

130 Sq. Miles
Watershed area

by Maggie Brenner

Butternut Valley Vibrates with Artistic Energy

What does Oneonta have in common with Bennington, VT, Steamboat Springs, CO, and Vineyard Haven, MA? They are each ranked as one of the top 10 small communities in the United States for arts vibrancy.

In 2018, Oneonta and its surrounding area ranked 8th in The Arts Vibrancy Index by DataArts of Southern Methodist University (<https://culturaldata.org/pages/arts-vibrancy-index-2019/>). The index ranks communities on the vitality of their arts programs based on criteria such as total number of individual artists and organizations, program revenues and grants and other government funding. While the research cited the Fenimore Art Museum and Glimmerglass Opera Company of Cooperstown and the Foothills Performing Arts Center in Oneonta specifically, it made clear that the data is based on the total area of influence of the larger metropolitan center.

The arts influence extends to the Butternut Valley. "I'm not surprised by the survey," says Marilyn Roveland, Board Member of the Butternut Valley Arts and Crafts Center. "Our classes have turnout from all over the county. We get some of that overflow from Cooperstown and Oneonta."

Elizabeth Nields has operated her pottery studio near Gilbertsville since 1974. "There are so many concentrations of artists like in Franklin and Treadwell and here in Gilbertsville. And it's an open

community — there are quite a few club-houses, places for artists to gather. It's very fluid."

Diana Schwab, who operates a fabric arts business in Pittsfield, describes herself as fairly new to the scene but "so far, it has been fantastic. It's a symbiotic environment. I have developed a following of students from Oneonta and Cooperstown. The interest is there and I think it's only going to grow. I work with a store in Milford and other outlets such as festivals. Folks from last year's Summer Harvest Festival have contacted me for lessons."

"For an area this size, there are a lot of talented artists," says Doug Ernst, retired school teacher, professional musician and BVA Board Member. "It's a mixed bag. I've been in this area since the 80s and there are not as many gigs as there used to be, but there are still opportunities. There is the Catskill Orchestra which is a great resource for an area of this size and Glimmerglass Opera hires local musicians. It's a good musical community.

You get to know everyone — it's not too big. You always know somebody."

The concentration of talent in the Butternut Valley is reflected in the variety of resources available — from individual artists to galleries such as the Dunderberg

and GEM in Gilbertsville, from private instructors to arts programs such as the Butternut Valley Arts and Crafts Center, from school performing arts programs to cafes and restaurants with music nights. Residents and visitors looking to learn



Steel sculpture and design process examples at the 2019 Summer Harvest Festival exhibited by Gilbertsville Expressive Movement (GEM).

new skills or appreciate other's talents have an array of opportunities.

The Arts Vibrancy Index reports that 300,000 people a year visit the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. "If we could see just a small percentage of them come to the Valley, there would be benefit to many of the businesses in the area," explains Graham Stroh, BVA Executive Director. "Our challenge is to draw more visitors to the Butternut Valley to share our artistic wealth."

Artists interested in participating in this year's Summer Harvest Festival should contact Maggie Brenner at Brenner_Maggie@yahoo.com



Crystal Postighone in her Morris glass-blowing studio.



25

Annual Meeting
3:30pm
Empire House, Gilbertsville



14

Butternut Creek Fun Float
For information and to register
please see the BVA website



20

Summer Harvest Festival
3:00-7:00pm
Guy Rathbun Park, Morris

by Stacia Norman

The Plastic Film Recycling Challenge

How much plastic film did you use today as you shopped, prepared, or stored your meals? Whether it was little or lots, please join the students at Morris Central and Gilbertsville-Mount Upton schools in collecting plastic film for recycling! MCS and GMU are participating in a challenge against other Otsego County schools (and each other) to see which school



can collect the most plastic film between November 15 and April 15.*

The purpose of this challenge is to recover plastic film in order to keep it out of our region's landfill. Plastic film cannot be recycled through regular curbside recycling programs. Although it cannot be placed in curbside recycling bins, it can be delivered back to grocery stores, which are required by law to accept

all types of plastic film for recycling.

Plastic film items include grocery bags, bread bags, case overwrap, dry cleaning bags, newspaper sleeves, ice bags, wood pellet bags, ziploc and other reclosable bags, produce bags, bubble wrap, salt bags, and cereal bags. If it stretches, it's plastic film! Please make sure all plastic is clean, dry and free of food residue. You can drop off your film at the front desk at either MCS or GMU.

**MCS collects the plastic year round, including the summer, so don't stop!*



What is the BVA? from page 1

velopment and bettering the lives of watershed residents. The planning process ensures that all interests — residential, business, and government — are represented. This planning process is voluntary and the outcome will be what we, the people living and doing business in the watershed, decide it will be. This is a long process of engaging stakeholders from individual landowners, elected leaders, businesses and state agencies which should wrap up in 2021.

So, BVA is, in part, an environmental organization because we see our agricultural heritage, our forests, fields, and streams as key contributors to why we love our community. But we are also an economic development, agricultural, historical, and cultural organization that recognizes and celebrates the diver-

sity of our communities. Each of our towns, villages, and hamlets are unique and have constituencies that have their own distinct characteristics. BVA works to foster dialog about what shared values our communities have and what we can accomplish together to achieve our shared goals.

In my role as the Executive Director, I speak with many environmental, planning and community organizations such as Chemung River Friends, Susquehanna Coalition, and Otsego County Department of Solid Waste to name a few. These and others see the Butternut Watershed as an example of best practices they want their communities to follow. They ask what it is that makes our valley's successes possible. The answer is, of course, that our community cares and has been working on it for years through the BVA — it's not

rocket science — but it is hard work.

Your financial support makes it possible for us to host the gravel grinders bike ride in New Lisbon (which brought 120 bikers to the valley for the day), conduct a roundtable discussion about hospitality services (wedding venues, lodgings, campsites) in our area, help launch the Friends of the Otsego County Fair organization, host really cool public lectures like the Linn Tractor lecture, and more. The BVA has had great success over the past 11 years which gives us the opportunities with our partners to do a lot more today than when we first started.



Graham Stroh
Executive Director, BVA

by Les Hasbargen & Ed Lentz

Water-Quality Monitoring in Butternut Creek

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission has established a real-time water-quality monitoring station at Flatiron Road over Butternut Creek, close to Mt. Upton. The station records water temperature, specific conductance, pH, and turbidity.

Turbidity is a measure of how much sediment is in the water, and to the present, there has not been a continuous record for Butternut Creek. Turbidity measurements will provide a much better picture of the sediment and nutrient loads moving through the watershed. Chart 1 shows the record from August 2019 to mid January 2020. The large spikes in turbidity occur during larger runoff events, usually after heavy rainstorms.

In addition to the real-time monitoring of the creek at Flatiron Road, since October 2017 BVA volunteers have conducted monthly

water-quality monitoring of the creek in New Lisbon.

Volunteers have worked with the citizen science monitoring program to record monthly snapshots of the creek's water quality at about the midpoint in our watershed.

The water-quality indicators that are analyzed include plant nutrients such as orthophosphate and nitrogen as well as temperature, electrical conductivity of the water, pH, dissolved oxygen and turbidity. Nutrient concentrations are very low. Annual cycles of temperature, dissolved oxygen, and electrical conductivity are readily detected. See Chart 2 for details.

While more data is always desired, the monitoring provides a baseline for the creek's health and a way to evaluate future changes.

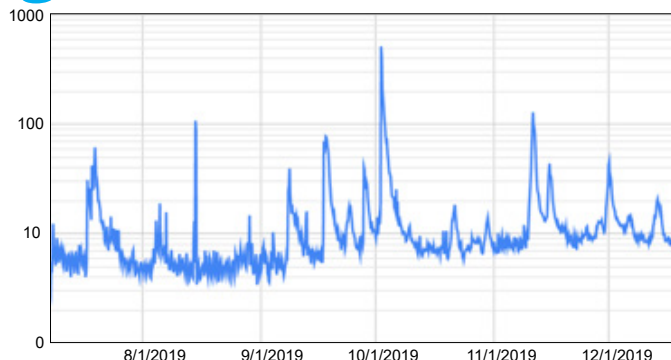


Chart 1. Turbidity (in NTU: nephelometric turbidity units) record for Butternut Creek at Flatiron Road.

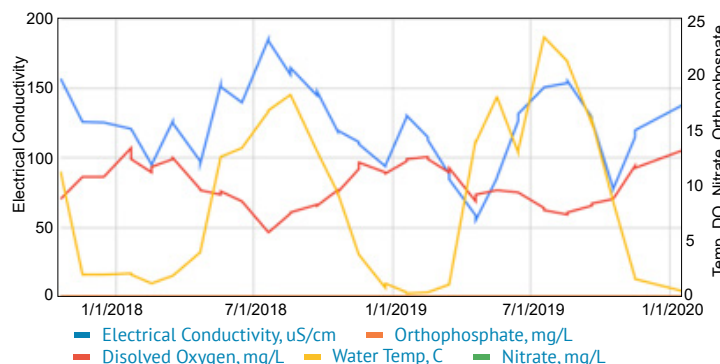


Chart 2. Water-quality indicators at New Lisbon.

Please Join or Donate to the Butternut Valley Alliance

The BVA is doing good work in the Butternut Valley for us, for our children and for our children's children. Help us maintain the pace of our work by supporting the alliance with your generous donation. Please also invite your friends

to become BVA members. Donations small or large to the BVA go a long way. Donations can be made by check or online at the Butternut Valley Alliance website:

butternutvalleyalliance.org

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