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Future of the Wallkill River discussed at conference

By Mid-Hudson News Network

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NEW PALTZ, N.Y. >> SUNY New Paltz hosted a “Future of the Wallkill River” event Thursday night.

The conference brought environmental advocates from a number of counties, as well as local elected officials, together to talk about the state of the river and to brainstorm ideas for its future.

Main topics of focus were drinking water, land use, recreation, farming, fish, wildlife and habitat.

About halfway through the event, groups broke into separate sessions to discuss each of the focus topics.

One of the unified concerns of the sessions was the need for more data, updated data models and communication between organizations and their local governments.

Agreeing that more could be done to update data, educate, and connect activists and local government were Orange County Planning Commissioner David Church, Ulster County Planning Director Dennis Doyle, Amanda LaValle, who is Ulster County environment director, and Laura Heady of the Hudson River Estuary Program.

“There’s a lot of talk about some means of having better communication between different constituents and interests so they can know what’s going on: events, data, information, projects”, said David Church.

Dan Shapley of Riverkeeper said the main goal of the event was to bring interested parties together to form a new organization dedicated to the future of a healthy Wallkill River.

“The real focus of tonight was to try to really get a lot of people, find new people, who are really informed and interested and concerned about the Wallkill, bring them together so that we can build a new citizen watershed group that can carry efforts into the long term,” Shapley said.

That new group, which has yet to be named, will have its first meeting June 4 at SUNY New Paltz.

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