

Natural Patterns

Highlands encompass mountainous areas, ridgelines, and hillsides, providing large blocks of land for wildlife habitat, important plant species, and scenic woodlands. Because of steep slopes, exposed bedrock, and shallow, erodible soils, Highlands are generally only appropriate for scattered housing, forests, and recreational uses. The Hudson Highlands along the county's southern boundary have acted as a barrier for expanding metropolitan development out of New York City.

High ridgelines can often support continuous trail systems, such as the Appalachian Trail, which runs through southeast Dutchess on its 2,100 mile length from Georgia to Maine. Highland trails are particularly valuable because they offer the opportunity to experience rare wilderness areas and spectacular viewpoints.

Key Principles for Highlands:

- Avoid disturbing steep slopes;
- Keep any buildings in trees and below the ridgeline;
- Build ridgeline trails with occasional open vistas.



East Mt., Town of Dover

D.C. Environmental Mgmt Council



Illustration by: Patricia M. Houston, DCPD

Lowlands include the waterways, wetlands, and floodplain systems of the valley floors. The 100-year floodplains are regulated by municipalities to restrict residential and other uses that would be damaged by high waters. They store heavy stormwater flows, so filling floodplains for new construction often endangers downstream properties. Floodplains are ideal for parks and waterfront access, farming, and the preservation of vegetation to help prevent run-off pollution into streams.

Wetlands are areas where the water table is at or near the surface part of the year, creating natural places for the storage, filtration, and recharge of groundwater. They are particularly important habitat for waterfowl, wildlife, and plant species. Wetlands are regulated at both the state and federal levels, with state wetlands also including a 100-foot buffer zone. Regulated wetlands often combine with lowlying floodplains along waterways to form linear patterns that are generally restricted from development - perfect for potential trails. Waterways are trails in themselves for small boats or even just wading, if public access points to the water's edge are available.

Key Principles for Lowlands:

- Protect wetlands and adjacent buffers with a goal of no net loss;
- Avoid building in floodplains and maintain vegetation along water's edge;
- Provide trails along waterways with regular public access points.



Greenly Swamp, Town of Wappinger

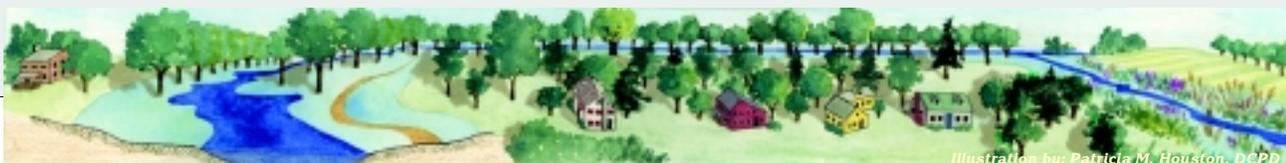


Illustration by: Patricia M. Houston, DCPD

Highland and Lowland systems provide natural Greenway corridors for connecting paths running through large sections of the county.

