

# ANNSVILLE CREEK TO POPOLOPEN CREEK

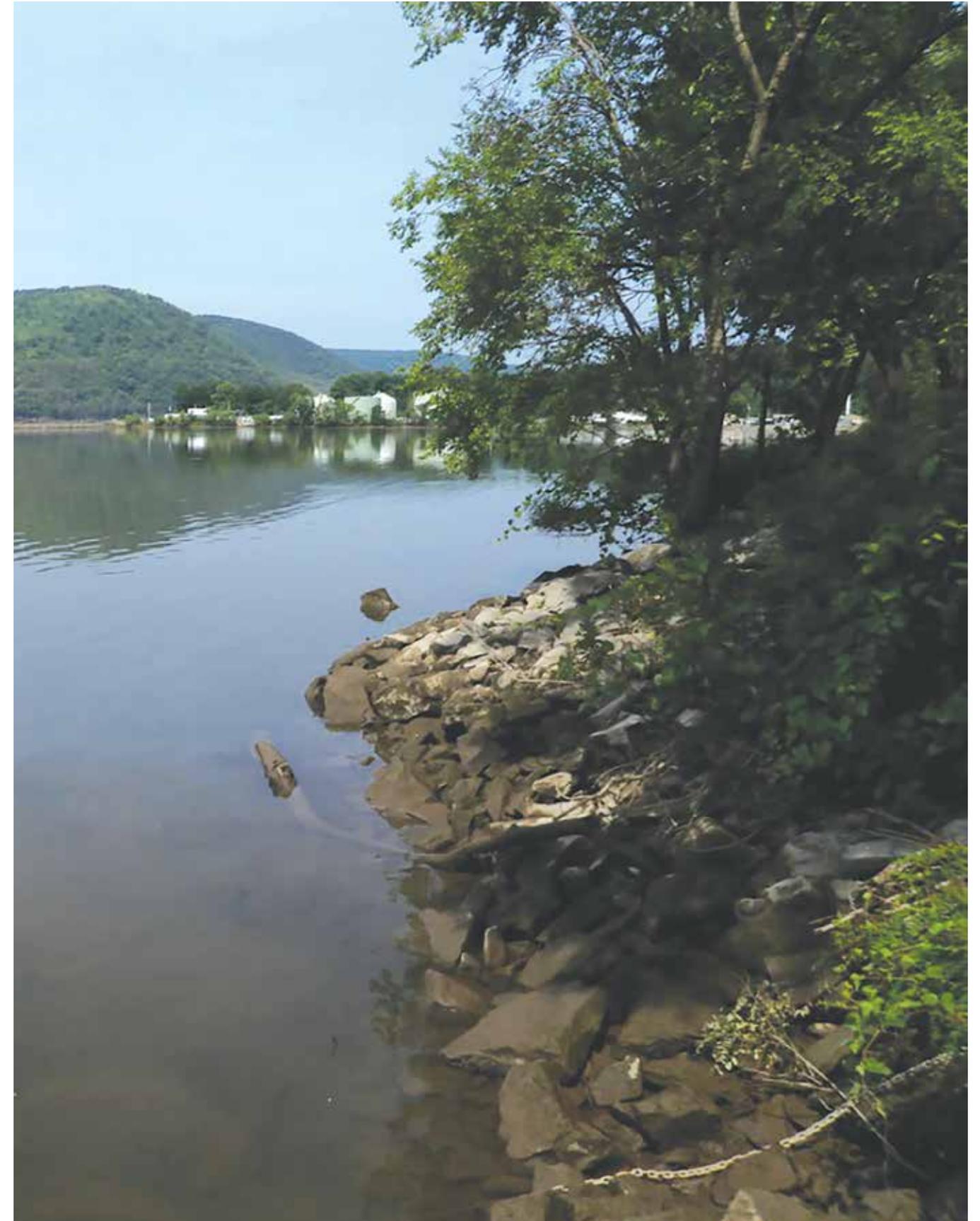
by **Ralph Ferrusi**

***We Come  
Close To  
"Biting Off  
More Than  
We Can  
Chew"***

**T**his Spring/early Summer has been one of the best starts to our canoeing season in a long time. We've visited a lot of creeks that dump into the Hudson: the Rondout, Wappingers, Fishkill, and, Stony Creek that dumps into Tivoli Bays. Most have been featured, or mentioned, in this magazine.



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Awhile ago John suggested we visit Popolopen Creek and its waterfall. We hadn't been up to the Popolopen since, hmmm, about the 1800's. Weeks later: "Kath, whaddayah say we put in at the Pataki place on Annsville Circle and paddle up to the Popolopen Creek waterfall??? If the tide's good, we can paddle up to the end of Annsville after we get back."

Most of this year's canoe trips have been around two hours or so, and we knew this one would be longer—the Popolopen was a fair ways upriver from Annsville, and the wind and tide would be factors—but we decided, in the Good Old American Way, to Go For It.

It was a fine day for paddling—lotsa blue sky, some puffy white clouds—and the tide was near perfect: incoming, but with plenty of water. On the other hand, the wind was coming right up the reach from Peekskill Bay to beyond the Bear Mountain Bridge. The tide, and the wind, would be with us on the way north, but, we'd be bucking them both on the way back.

The parking lot at the "Pataki Place" (any New York State Governor who votes to create places like this is My Kinda Guy) was pretty much jam-packed, but Kath found a place to park the Subaru in the shade out by 9D. And, the grounds were pretty much jam-packed with kayaks and kayakers: not a canoe in sight.

I digress: didn't the Native Americans (we called them "indians") in this area use canoes—birch bark or dugouts—to get around on the rivers and lakes??? And weren't kayaks pretty much a

frozen north Eskimo phenomenon??? So how come the Hudson has, of late, become pretty much filled, shore to shore, with kayaks, and, from our river experiences, canoes are rarer than the proverbial hen's teeth???

Some thoughts: You can kayak solo: you don't need a partner. And, kayaks are inherently more stable than canoes: your backside is below the water line, whereas in a canoe it's a foot or so above the waterline. And, with a double-bladed paddle it's much easier to keep a kayak

going in pretty much a straight line than it is to keep a solo canoe going straight with a single-bladed paddle.

My first human-powered boat was a 13-foot Montgomery Ward "Sea King" aluminum canoe (it's still on saw horses up behind the shed) and I've owned several more modern/refined canoes since. I've tried kayaks, and done pretty well in them, but, I just about always feel cramped/confined, and my legs always seem to eventually cramp up.

Back to Annsville: as usual, it took forever to get all the crap—umm, "gear"—all sorted out and loaded up. The big black plastic dock/put-in was a joy, particularly compared to the more typical mud-/rock-infested put-ins we usually deal with. We glided across smooth Annsville "Bay" and went under the Metro North bridge in the center section, heading the warnings signs not to use either end, as there were "navigational hazards" hidden below their surfaces.

Sure enough, the river was kicking up a bit, but we'd seen worse: a LOT worse. There was a lot more power boat traffic than we'd seen in April and May: I'd become more used to "having the river to ourselves" than I thought I had... And, Iona Island looked pretty far away. We had to cross over to the west shore, and when we were finally pretty close to the south end of Iona, Kath asked if we should scootch cross. We both carefully checked up and down the river and there was a big gap



in the power boat traffic, so we dug in and before very long we were just off a rocky "beach" on the south end of Iona.

There were no signs saying we couldn't do this, that, or the other thing, so we landed and walked up to a high bluff above the beach. The rugged topography of this island is unique, and interesting. We came to a good view downriver towards Peekskill Bay and Dunderberg. The



view upriver towards Bear Mountain Bridge and Anthony's Nose wasn't as clear, but all in all it was a worthwhile short hike.

Iona Island seemed much much longer while canoeing up its eastern shoreline than, say, driving by it on Route 9W. It took a while to reach its northern tip, and "Bear Mountain Bay" also looked much broader than it does, say, from the bridge. Checking my watch, we'd been on the river over two hours, and still hadn't reached Popolopen...

Be VERY CAREFUL going underneath the railroad bridge at the mouth of the creek. It appeared that every single opening had underwater piling hidden in the middle. We hugged the left-hand side of the center opening; nasty pilings were looming just below the surface of the water to our right.

We were soon paddling under the graceful New York-New Jersey Trail Conference hiking trail bridge, then the 9W bridge high above, and pretty much next thing we knew the creek narrowed down to a field of BIG boulders, with the (not that

impressive now since it hasn't rained in months) waterfall just beyond.

There were four teenage boys jumping off the 20-30-foot cliff into the deep (I hoped) pool below the falls—I used to do this back in the day, but I am not tempted any more—it was good to see young boys being young boys. We sat down and enjoyed a picnic lunch, then it was time to bite the bullet and head south. We were very careful going back under the railroad bridge, knowing what we now knew about the pilings.

And, the river was REALLY kicking up now. We decided to immediately head to the east shore, pretty much right under the Bear Mountain Bridge. The wind was now so strong that as hard as we paddled, we were being blown upriver. It was going to be a long trip back: had we bitten off more than we could chew???

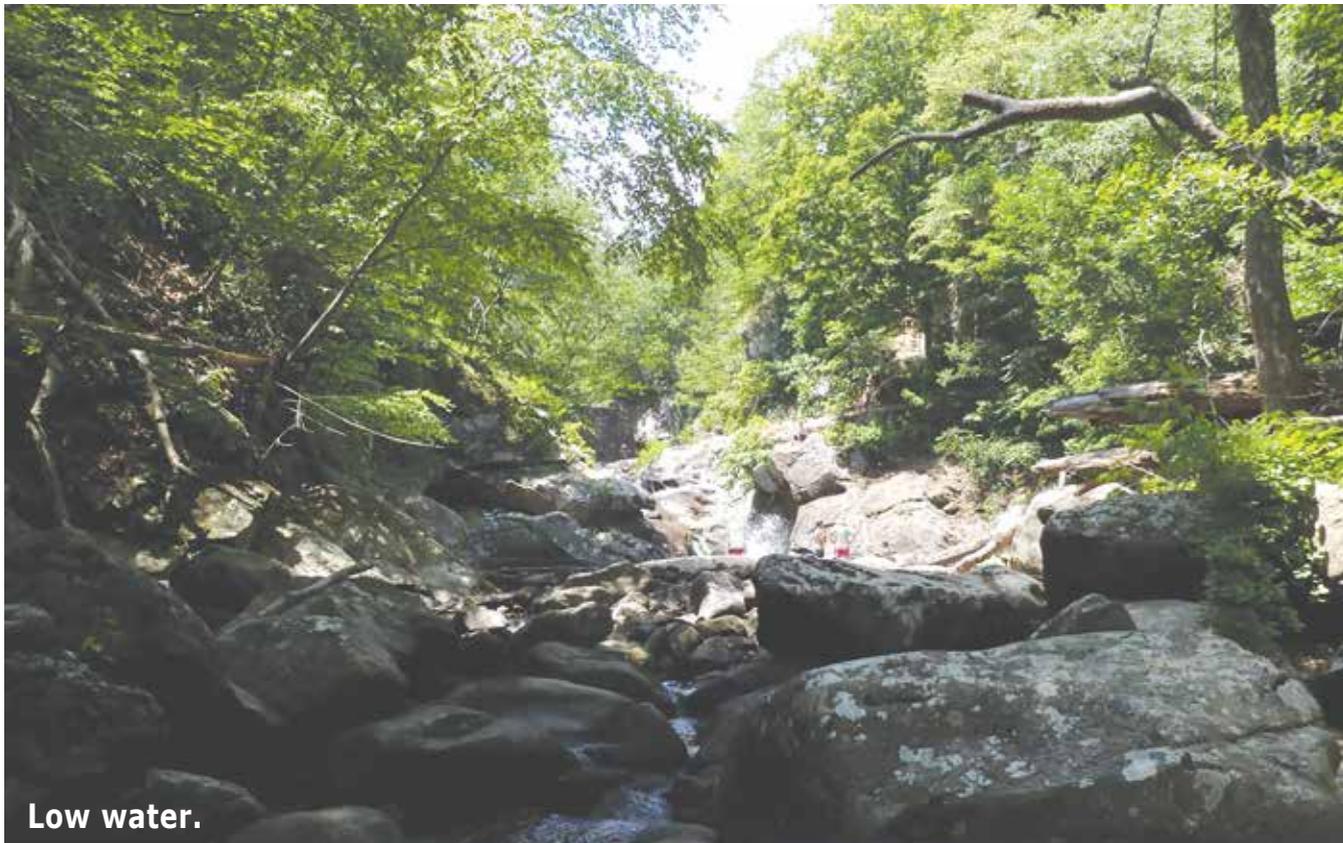
Finally, close to the eastern shore, we put our heads down and dug in, keeping close to shore the whole way back. There were even more power boats on the river than before: it was like The Good Old Days of Powerboating on the Hudson. This did exacerbate our situation,

as a lot of the boats were ripping along like they did in The Good Old Days, and sometimes, between the strong headwind, and criss-crossing wakes, things got, shall we say, a bit dicey, and our Class II/III whitewater skills came in really handy. I was really impressed how our 17-foot Sundowner handled all this, bobbing along like a cork, confirming its inherent seaworthiness.

It seemed to take forever to get back to the Metro North bridge at the head of Annsville: it almost seemed like the bridge was moving away from us. Finally under the bridge, out of the wind and away from the big wakes, four hours and forty-five minutes after setting out, I was tempted to ask Kath is she still wanted to head up Annsville Creek, playing "dodge the kayaks", but for once in my life I kept my big mouth shut.

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Low water.



## Hudson River Community Sailing Receives Three Grants For Adaptive Sailing Program

**H**udson River Community Sailing (HRCS), a leading nonprofit organization that provides sailing education and recreation for underserved New York City youth and the community at large, is proud to announce that it has been awarded three grants to fund its Adaptive Sailing Program: \$25,000 from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation for 2022, \$50,000 from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation for 2023-2024, and \$20,000 from the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund for 2022-2023. These grants will help HRCS expand its work for people living with Spinal Cord Injuries and Illnesses (SCI), and provide additional waterfront recreational opportunities for New Yorkers living with other disabilities.

Launched in 2021, HRCS's Adaptive Sailing Program provides waterfront access, sailing education, and community building to New Yorkers living with physical and developmental disabilities. People living with disabilities often become isolated by a lack of recreational and social opportunities, especially outdoor opportunities, and HRCS aims to help shift this paradigm for some New Yorkers. Drawing upon 14 years of providing transformative on-water programs, HRCS's goal is to make New York City a place where anyone, regardless of physical or developmental challenges, can feel safe, have fun, and be empowered on the water.

The grant HRCS received from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation is part of the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation National Paralysis Resource Center (NPRC) 2022 1st Cycle Direct Effect Quality of Life grants. To date, 57 grants totaling \$1,216,425 have been awarded. The Quality of Life Grants Program supports nonprofit organizations that empower individuals living with paralysis. The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation funds both community programs and scientific research that help improve the lives of people living with SCIs. There have been 2,260 grants totaling \$277 million awarded since 2003. The NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund was launched in 2020 to support stewardship organizations that care for New York City's parks and open spaces. In July 2021, the fund awarded 64 grants totaling nearly \$2 million to NYC-based small- and medium-sized nonprofit organizations to support environmental stewardship and health and wellness programs in parks, gardens, and open spaces.

"We are honored and privileged to receive these grants," said HRCS Executive Director Robert Burke. "We are thankful to partner with these organizations to remove the barriers for people living with disabilities, and the isolation those barriers create."



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