

Vol.4, Issue 1

For nearly a decade now, SOS has been championing the Town of Schoharie's land use law. This view of the existing quarry shows its current proximity to the village and the large amount of land it has already extracted.



SOS Chairman update ...

Schoharie stands strong

How long has it been?

How long has it been? Five years? Seven years? Actually, we're approaching **eight years** since the community first learned about Cobleskill Stone Products' purchase of 69 acres of land south of the existing quarry and its desire to mine that property. At that time, the town of Schoharie completed its land use law and adopted it, in August 2005. With broad support from the community, the land use law effectively changed the zoning for the land that CSP had purchased, from agriculture (with mining possible if granted a special use permit) to agriculture (with mining not allowed).

The Department of Environmental Conservation held public meetings on the proposed expansion, held an issues conference and its regional office recommended against approval of CSP's application for mine expansion, citing incompatibility of the expanded mine with the community character of Schoharie.

End of story. Or not.

Over the past eight years, the town of Schoharie has spent more energy and more scarce resources defending that law than it ever thought would be necessary. The land use law has been supported by the town through four town elections, two town administrations, the "Great Recession" and the 500-year flood called Irene.

This is quite a testament to the commitment of this town to protect its future. A lesser community would have given in at some point over those many years, worn down by the effort. But Schoharie hasn't. A community less concerned

about the threat of a continually-growing quarry overlooking the village would have "made a deal" and hoped for the best. Yet Schoharie didn't.

A community tired of defending itself would have elected town board members and town supervisors willing to change the law to suit the quarry. But Schoharie repeatedly cast its votes for those who pledged to stand firm.

Of course, Schoharie is no ordinary community. How else can one explain its determination to rebuild after the unprecedented damage from Irene – with 80% of all homes and 100% of all businesses in the village rendered unusable after the flood? What other reason is there for flood recovery experts from around the country to come to Schoharie to learn about effective community-based recovery efforts? By all accounts, the pace of recovery here has been unusually quick and uniquely broad with a majority of homes back in operation within eighteen months and more businesses on Main Street now than before the flood.

Despite it being very "old news", quarry expansion is still as big a concern to this highly-motivated community as ever. The continued existence of Save Our Schoharie after nearly eight years and the necessary attention to flood recovery is simply another sign of the unique strength of the residents of Schoharie.

Your support for the town and village officials through membership in SOS is as critical to Schoharie's future today as it was eight years ago.

Save Our Schoharie's Mission statement:

Save Our Schoharie (SOS) is a volunteer group of residents and property owners concerned for the effective preservation and enhancement of Schoharie's natural environment, economic vitality, public health and quality of life.

SOS recognizes and supports the town and village of Schoharie's comprehensive plans. These official policy documents call for revitalization of existing business and residential areas, protection of historic properties and settings, preservation of agricultural lands and economies, stewardship of natural resources and careful design and siting of new residential and business development.

Specifically:

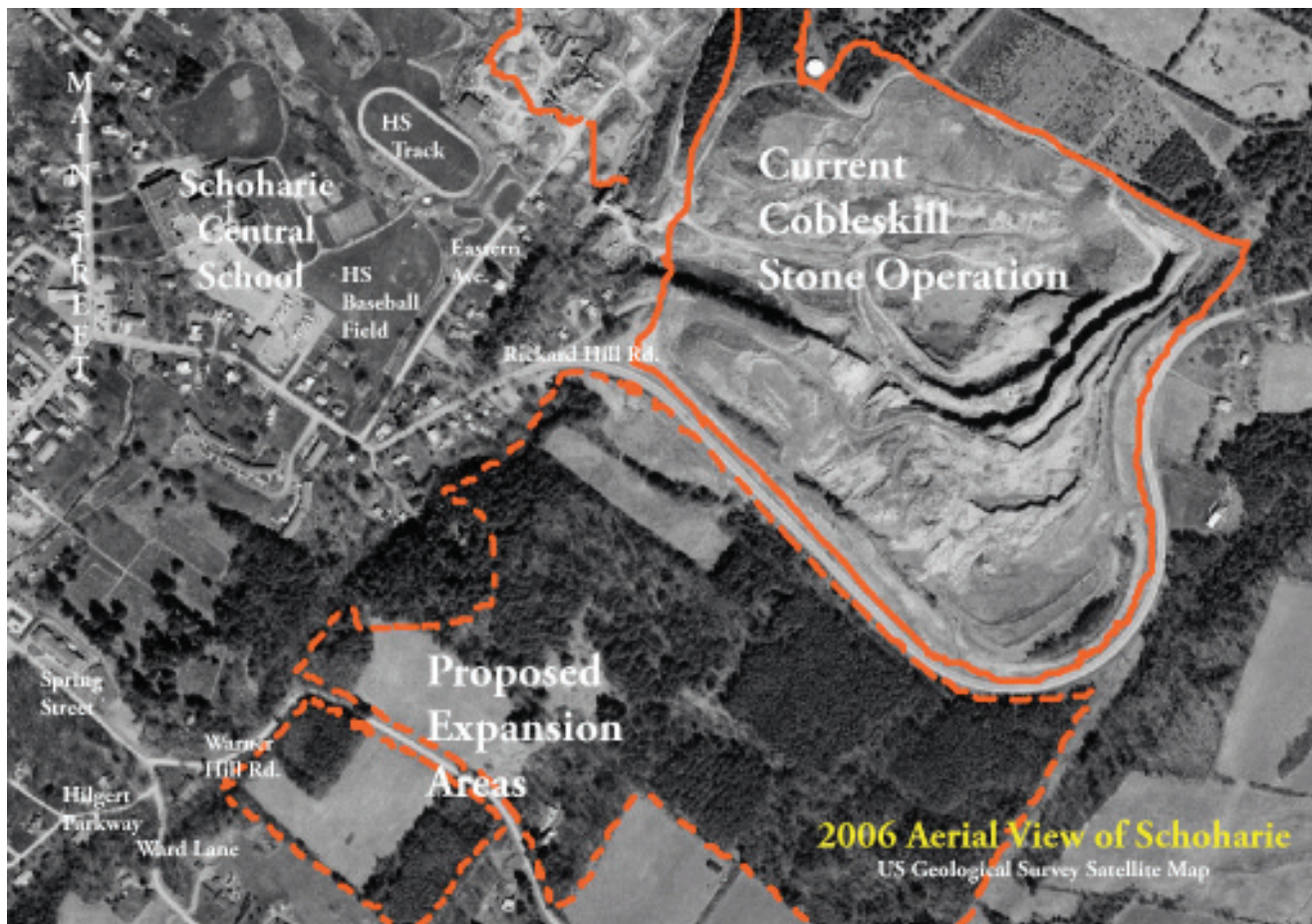
SOS seeks a balanced, community-driven approach to public policy, infrastructure investment and land use decisions so that these actions may best achieve the comprehensive goals of the town and village plans.

SOS believes that only through cooperative efforts to create and sustain an attractive, safe, cohesive and inviting community will Schoharie have sufficient appeal to residents and visitors to support a healthy economy and provide an adequate tax base for the schools and public services that we all desire.

SOS recognizes that the 21st century poses unprecedented challenges for

older rural communities in Upstate New York, and that the threats to the character and viability of Schoharie include the significant potential for loss of agriculture, decline of Main Street business activity, stagnant tourist trade, lagging property values and growing tax rates.

SOS will assist municipal leaders in actions that reflect the balanced, comprehensive nature of the adopted plans and will support private investment that advances the collective vision for the community. SOS will also objectively articulate opposition to public or private action that is inconsistent with the collective vision or that jeopardizes its attainment.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW - The solid line in this overhead shot from seven years ago shows the massive size of the quarry already expanded by Cobleskill Stone Products at that point in time. The area within the dotted line shows CSP's desired expansion, onto land protected from quarrying by the town & village's shared land use law. CSP wants to tunnel under Rickard Hill Road, moved during the company's last expansion, and run a pit mine into what is currently mountainside

rising from the village. The resulting cavity would extend along the eastern edge of historic Lasell Park and continue onto acreage across both Warner Hill Road ending at Ward Lane. Despite the town & village land use law, years of clear public opposition and DEC's recommendation that the permit should be denied as being clearly harmful to community character, Cobleskill Stone has persisted in its determination that the land become an extension of its current mine.


SOS members are not anti-mining but are against locating mines in densely populated communities, where fugitive dust wafts over school yards and retirement communities.



A QUESTION OF COMPATIBILITY - The dust in this photo is from an early afternoon Cobleskill Stone blast on June 17, 2009, conducted while the school (lower left) was holding its annual field day. Save Our Schoharie (SOS) works in support of the hundreds of residents who showed up at a DEC public hearing to say a resounding "NO" to extending this industry and the cavity it creates ever-deeper into the village's scenic mountainside.



During its last expansion in the early '90s, Cobleskill Stone Products moved Brian Kennedy's house (upper right) to a new location and landscaped the property, with the oral assurance that the quarry wouldn't stretch to Rickard Hill Road within the homeowner's lifetime. That promise held no sway as, by 2005, the quarry had already reached the newly moved Rickard Hill Road. Wind-borne dust from blasts sometimes covers the Kennedy property and woods behind it (inset). In 2006, CSP tried to excuse the broken promise away, asking how were they to know that business would triple, prompting the more aggressive excavation of material.



Save Our Schoharie
Chairman . . . John Poorman
Vice Chairman . . . Robert Montione
Treasurer . . . Peter Johnson
Secretary . . . Dawn Johnson
Newsletter Editor . . . Tom Smith

Join the effort!
Support the work of SOS

SOS invites all those sympathetic to its fight to preserve the character of Schoharie's environment to join.

The group meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Schoharie Reformed Church Heritage House.

We welcome different levels of participation.

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP: \$20 annually

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP: \$10 annually

FROM RICKARD HILL RD. – CSP blast of May 3 totally obscures Terrace Mountain

5 3 '06

Please return this portion with checks payable to:

S.O.S. PO Box 856 Schoharie, NY 12157

Check **all** that apply:

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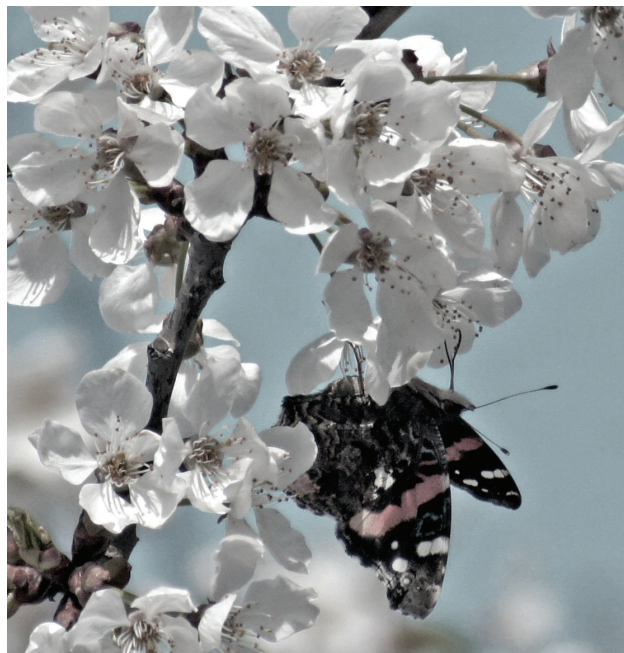
☐ I (we) would be happy to help when & if we're able.

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After nearly 8 years, hope springs anew that Schoharie will win a final decision in its long battle to ward off Cobleskill Stone Products' challenge to the town & village's shared long-range goals, crafted after an extensive survey of residents. Ultimately, the courts will decide if an historically rich residential region has a right to put a stop to industrial crawl and its permanently destructive impacts on community character.

S.O.S.
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