FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HHLT Improves Access for Visitors to Granite Mountain Preserve

*Putnam Valley nature preserve expands to more than 500 areas*

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) announced the opening of a new parking area at its Granite Mountain Preserve at a ribbon cutting event in late November. This parking area facilitates public access to this beautiful unspoiled space in the heart of Putnam Valley.

Last year, HHLT permanently conserved more than 350 acres on Granite Mountain, creating a new Preserve that protects vital wildlife habitat and drinking water, while serving as a recreational resource for the community. Since then, the organization has been working to improve the existing trail system and make the Preserve more accessible to the public.

The organization hosted a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Thursday, November 29th to unveil the recently-completed Peekskill Hollow Road access area and parking lot. This new parking area, which is conveniently located through the main gate to the Preserve, includes 12 parking spaces and will soon include a large informational kiosk to help guests plan their visit.

Numerous Town and County officials were in attendance to help mark the occasion, including Putnam Valley Town Supervisor **Sam Oliverio** (see photo), NYS Assemblyman **Kevin Byrne** (see photo), Putnam Valley Councilwoman and representative for State Senator Sue Serino **Jackie Annabi**, and Putnam Valley Councilwoman **Wendy Whetsel**. Other groups and organizations represented included the Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Putnam Valley Environmental Commission, the Putnam Valley Central School District, Putnam Valley Parks & Recreation Department, and Hudson River Valley Greenway (which is providing funds for both the parking area and the new trail improvements).
At the event, HHLT also announced the near-term expansion of the Preserve with the addition of an adjacent parcel by year-end. HHLT is also working with Putnam County on a management agreement for their adjoining land, which will bring the Preserve to more than 500 acres in total.

HHLT is in the process of upgrading and rerouting the Granite Mountain Preserve trail system. The improvements, which will better protect the property's natural resources and enhance the visitor experience, should be completed by the end of next year, at which point detailed trail maps will be readily available. In the meantime, HHLT will be offering guided hikes of the Preserve as improvements are being completed. Please contact info@hhlt.org if you are interested in hiking in the Preserve.

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Sam Oliverio, Putnam Valley Town Supervisor, said, “Having grown up in Putnam Valley, the acquisition of Granite Mountain Preserve by the Hudson Highlands Land Trust is truly a dream come true for our entire community. This preservation of over 500 pristine acres provides all of our residents an opportunity for recreation, education, and, most importantly, the protection of our precious watershed and all of the abundant fauna and flora that those beautiful mountains contain. Thank you Hudson Highlands Land Trust for an acquisition so very well executed and accomplished.”

Kevin Byrne, New York State Assemblyman representing Putnam Valley, said, “This expansion and increased access to open space at Granite Mountain Preserve will greatly benefit our community. As someone who grew up in Putnam Valley, not far from the Preserve, I have always personally treasured our open spaces in the area. Our open spaces and parkland are some of the main attractions for people who visit the Hudson Valley. This expanded access to the Preserve will provide both environmental and recreational benefits to the community, and is an important component to improving our quality of life in the region.”

Katrina Shindledecker, HHLT's Director of Conservation, said, “Granite Mountain has been an important land protection priority for us, particularly given the lack of publicly accessible open space in southern Putnam Valley, where most of the Town’s residents live. We are thrilled to now be able to offer the Preserve as a resource to the community, especially once the trail work is completed next year. We are grateful to all of our conservation partners and the Putnam Valley community for helping to make Granite Mountain Preserve a reality.”

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ABOUT GRANITE MOUNTAIN PRESERVE
HHLT acquired three land parcels in 2017 to permanently conserve 358 acres on Granite Mountain in Putnam Valley. The new Preserve contains a network of woodland hiking trails that will provide recreational opportunities for area residents and visitors.

Granite Mountain is located within the watershed of the Peekskill Hollow Brook, part of both the City of Peekskill and Town of Cortlandt drinking water systems. It provides important habitat for wildlife, and was listed in the 2007 Town of Putnam Valley Comprehensive Plan as being “of significant interest to the community.” Granite Mountain is also an important part of the Croton-to-Highlands Biodiversity Area, identified by both New York State and the US Forest Service as a conservation priority.

ABOUT HHLT
The Hudson Highlands Land Trust is a community-based, accredited, non-profit conservation organization with a mission to protect and preserve the natural resources, rural character and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands. www.hhlt.org

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Crowd including County and Town officials gathers in the new Granite Mountain Preserve parking area ahead of the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

Putnam Valley Town Supervisor Sam Oliverio welcomes guests and highlights the benefits of the Preserve to the Putnam Valley community.
NYS Assemblyman Kevin Byrne presents HHLT Executive Director Michelle Smith with a Proclamation from the New York State Assembly offering praise and congratulations for the completion of the new access and parking area.

HHLT Executive Director Michelle Smith cuts the ribbon at the site of the soon-to-be information kiosk, officially expanding public access to the Preserve.