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Welcome from CLC President
Troy Weldy

Dear volunteers,

Thank you for joining the Columbia Land Conservancy to care for land together through volunteering.

Whether you choose to volunteer by clearing trails, attending an event, or leading an educational program, your efforts make a real impact. You are part of a community of people making a positive impact on the land we love.

I hope you find volunteering with CLC to be educational, rewarding, and fun! When I think of volunteering, I remember a quote from one of CLC’s community partners: People think work is hard, but the work can be joyful.

Many hands make light work, and many hands together make the work more joyful.

Thank you again for doing your part to take care of this beautiful corner of the world. I hope to see you out on the trails this year, sharing the joy together.

Troy Weldy
President
The Columbia Land Conservancy brings people together to conserve, appreciate, and enjoy land. For nearly 40 years, CLC has collaborated with individuals, communities, and partners to ensure Columbia County is a beautiful, livable, resilient place.

**Our vision**
Columbia County is a beautiful, livable, resilient place. People are proud of and proud to care for that place.

**Our guiding principles**
Respectful: We treat others with respect - each other, our constituents, and our communities, respectful of different opinions and perspectives.

Inclusive: We are welcoming and inclusive, working to ensure our information, programs, and public lands are accessible to all who are interested.

Collaborative: We work with others with shared agendas to achieve our mission.

Serving nature: We work to protect the natural systems that support all life.

Operationally responsible: We manage our fiscal and informational resources with integrity and to protect personal data and privacy.
Diversity, equity, & inclusion goals

- **Strengthening our community.** Like a thriving ecosystem, conservation efforts are durable when they are interconnected. CLC commits to building trust-based relationships grounded in multiple perspectives to collaboratively address issues that impact the lives and dignity of our community, including safe drinking water and local food, housing unaffordability, and climate change.

- **Providing equitable access to and meaningful connection with the land.** There is no “right” way to connect with the land. CLC commits to providing broad and meaningful access to land – including public lands and conserved properties – for connection, recreation, cultural practices and ceremony, and income generation through farming and forestry.

- **Building a healthy workplace.** Change begins at home. CLC commits to building a culture where staff and board thrive, diversity is celebrated, and challenging conversations are embraced.

Values

- **Including many voices and perspectives.** CLC wants to hear your voice and your perspective, acknowledging that you may not have always felt welcome or included. CLC takes our role as a facilitator seriously and convenes conversations about land conservation and community needs, acknowledging the importance of challenging long-held assumptions and incorporating new perspectives.

- **Learning from the past and preparing for the future.** Land trusts have a responsibility to protect land forever. Part of that responsibility is considering the impact yesterday’s actions have today and today’s actions will have tomorrow. Black, Indigenous, and other Communities of Color remind us that land conservation historically involved oppression and violence. That history impacts their lives today. As a steward of the land, we commit to using conservation tools to equitably serve our community.

- **Accessing land is a right everyone deserves.** CLC believes you deserve the opportunity to access land in ways that are safe, welcoming, and meaningful. We commit to working together to solve problems innovatively, providing expertise and resources, and learning from others.
**Living land acknowledgment**

We humbly and gratefully acknowledge that Columbia County, New York is predominantly on the ancestral lands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans, who are the Indigenous people of this land. They were subject to genocide, coerced into assimilation, and forcibly removed from their homelands to what is now known as Wisconsin. They continue to retain their unbroken status as a Sovereign Native Nation. Despite removal, they continue to hold relationships with their homelands and settler communities.

As a land trust and the current steward of this place, CLC understands that access to land is a sacred and collective right. CLC recognizes the Indigenous history of this land, honors ancestors past and present, and supports current efforts to build more equitable spaces for all the human and non-human relatives who call this place home.

**About the land acknowledgment**

A committee of CLC staff developed this land acknowledgment. We worked in consultation with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and an Indigenous expert familiar with this area and shared with relevant sovereign nations with the intent of building relationships.

A land acknowledgement begins a long relationship between partners. As such, it is a living document, and never “completed.” CLC seeks to continue these relationships through learning, humility, and partnerships long into the future. If you have feedback to share about our land acknowledgment, please contact hello@ColumbiaLand.org.

**Beyond the land acknowledgment**

CLC is dedicated to moving forward in right relationship with the Indigenous communities whose land we currently occupy. In 2023, we have committed to rededicating all funds collected at CLC-owned properties to the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We are also committed to ensuring Indigenous history is included in the interpretive materials about these properties. We are investigating additional actions to take. These include cultural use easements on protected lands, learning more about Indigenous land management practices, and partnering on programs.

We are also dedicated to putting relationships first. You may not hear immediately about what CLC is working toward with Indigenous partners until an appropriate juncture. If you have ideas or contacts for CLC to consider, please email hello@ColumbiaLand.org.
Conservation’s complicated history

Some would argue that the conservation movement in the United States began in 1901 when Theodore Roosevelt became President. However, the National Park Service was created in 1872. Yellowstone became the first National Park and charged with protecting 3,472 square miles of pristine land.

The history of conservation in the United States isn’t as simple as one may think. We may be familiar with the creation of the National Parks. However, we often don’t hear about the sordid past that led to the conservation of the parkland. The concept of manifest destiny has led to the land’s destruction and violation. Clearcutting of forests, disruption of natural resources and ecosystems, and removal of the original stewards of the land – the Indigenous people. While conservation movements in the United States started to preserve the land and protect forests, waterways, and ecosystems, the movement itself left out Indigenous voices and people who had already been working to preserve the land. Although the National Park Service was created to protect large areas of land, one of the things that it did was sever stewardship between the land and the original stewards.

Though destruction of land has become more prevalent over the most recent decades with drilling and mining, it has only been now that Indigenous knowledge and teachings have started to be accepted by conservation groups and environmental activists. When we think about the history of conservation and land protection in the United States, it is also important to remember the original land stewards.

History content and resources contributed by:

Heather Bruegl (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin/First Line Descendent Stockbridge-Munsee)
Historian
As a volunteer, you have the right to expect:

• Complete information about each volunteer workday – a clear description of anticipated activities, what to pack, time, date, and location.
• A monthly email from CLC staff about upcoming opportunities.
• A staff member present at group workdays.
• Orientation and training for every volunteer role.
• A variety of tasks.
• Respect, thanks, and appreciation from CLC staff and members of the Board of Trustees.

As a volunteer, your responsibilities include:

• Signing up for programs and events in advance and arriving on time.
• Behaving in a manner consistent with CLC’s goals, values, and policies, including the Sexual Harassment Policy and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals.
• Asking for help when needed and following safety guidelines.
• Maintaining confidentiality of privileged information.
• Serving as ambassadors for CLC.
• Enjoying yourself!

Safety:

Your safety is CLC’s top priority. Do not volunteer for any event that is too far out of your comfort zone. If an event is more rigorous than anticipated, take breaks, and consider if continuing to participate is the best choice. Some volunteer workdays are outside in rugged terrain and may involve exposure to insects, allergens, poisonous plants, and other hazards. Please read the Waiver for more details.
Volunteer roles overview

Public lands volunteer
Does a day of hard work leave you with a smile on your face? Public lands volunteers can get out on the land in several ways:
• Attending group work parties - volunteering with CLC staff on scheduled projects where all tools and training are provided.
• Rapid Response Team Volunteers - serving as on-call help for the public lands team, for example, after extreme weather events.
• Independent Volunteers - using special skills and your own tools to maintain trails and construct infrastructure.

CLC work parties are typically hosted from May through October, but on-call and independent help is needed all year round.

Outreach and education volunteer
If the idea of helping a young person catch their first frog or making a new friend at the farmer’s market excites you – this is the role for you! Outreach and education volunteers assist with education programs and attend outreach events with CLC staff.

CLC attends outreach events and hosts most educational programs from May through October.

Photography volunteer
As a volunteer photographer, you help tell the story of CLC! Volunteers can serve as Event Photographers by signing up to attend and document educational programs, and/or serve as Independent Photographers who visit public lands and take photos on their own. Following each program or trek on the trails, volunteers upload their photos, which can then be used in CLC publications and social media. CLC asks that photography volunteers utilize their own cameras.

CLC can use photography volunteers all year round.
Volunteering with CLC

Getting started

• Visit the website at ColumbiaLand.org/Volunteering.
• Sign up for the volunteer email list.
• Review the Volunteer & Public Programs Waiver.
• Sign up for a volunteer orientation event! These quarterly scheduled events are a great way to meet the team and to learn about volunteer roles and how to get involved.

Signing up for a volunteer shift

CLC volunteers receive a monthly volunteer newsletter that includes information and registration forms for upcoming volunteer events.

Event registration for volunteer opportunities is managed through the website SignUp.com. Upon signing up for a volunteer shift for the first time, you will be prompted to create an account that is linked to an email account.

Need assistance using SignUp? Email Mallory Schultz at Mallory.Schultz@ColumbiaLand.org, she’d be happy to lend a hand.

How to self-report independent volunteer hours as an Independent Photography Volunteer or Independent Public Lands Volunteer

If you are volunteering outside of a scheduled event, make sure you track your hours, which are important for showing support for grants and community projects.

Every month’s Volunteer Newsletter will include a link to the ‘Monthly Volunteer Hours Form’ where you can report an approximate amount of time spent over the previous month volunteering independently on behalf of CLC. You’ll fill out this form within the SignUp platform once a month by entering the number of hours you worked. When you submit your response, you will have the opportunity share where you volunteered and what tasks you accomplished.

You do not need to submit volunteer hours if you are participating at a scheduled CLC event.
Appendix 1: Volunteer & Public Programs Waiver

Thank you for taking the time to read the volunteer and public programs waiver.

I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Columbia Land Conservancy, Inc. ("CLC"), its representing agencies, employees, board members, contractors, volunteers, and other representatives against any liability, claim, injury, or costs arising from or resulting from my work as a volunteer. I acknowledge that there are potential hazards associated with volunteering activities, and I agree to exercise common sense and follow all safety precautions to avoid accident and injury.

Activities: I understand activities may include, but are not limited to: hiking, planting, pulling weeds, and transportation to and from the activity site.
Environmental hazards include, but are not limited to: uneven terrain, rivers and streams, falling branches or trees, inclement weather, reaction to plants or insects, harm resulting from contact with animals, etc.

Safety: I understand that during my participation, I may be exposed to a variety of hazards and risks, foreseen or unforeseen. I appreciate that I may have to exercise extra care for my own person and for others around me in the face of such hazards. I agree to read, listen to, and follow all safety instructions.

Medical Care: I understand that there may not be rescue or medical facilities immediately available for the injuries I may suffer from the hazards and risks to which I may be exposed, and I agree that I am responsible for my own medical care. However, if I do receive medical care in the event of an emergency (for instance, if I am unconscious) I do release CLC from any and all claims resulting from any first aid, treatment, or service rendered. I understand CLC does not provide any health, medical, or disability insurance for participants.

Photographic Release: I hereby grant and convey unto CLC all rights, title, and interest in any and all photographic images and video or audio recordings made by CLC during the activities. I grant permission to CLC to use photographs taken of or shared by me for use in publications, including websites or other electronic forms or media, and to offer the photographs for use or distribution in all manners, for advertising, trade, promotional and other related lawful purposes without notifying me.

Severability: I agree if any part of this Waiver is determined to be unenforceable, it is intended that all other terms be enforced.

Termination of Agreement: I agree this public programs and volunteer waiver is binding until CLC receives a statement in writing that I no longer agree to the terms in this Waiver.
Organizational Policies: I have read and agree to abide by the organizational policies established by CLC. I agree that any and all information shared with me or that I may obtain about landowners, donors, employees, and fellow volunteers is confidential and shall not be divulged by me. I will not copy, transcribe, record, or memorize confidential information in any manner, nor disclose or use such information for any purpose beyond assigned volunteer services to Columbia Land Conservancy. It is my understanding that volunteer status may be revoked if these policies are violated.

Organizational Policies

Non-Discrimination Policy
The Columbia Land Conservancy does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, affectional preference, sexual orientation, age, gender, or any other basis forbidden by law in any volunteer decision.

Sexual Harassment and Offensive Behavior Policy Statement
The Columbia Land Conservancy is committed to maintaining a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. In keeping with this commitment, we maintain a strict policy that all volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from sexual harassment (or any form of harassment). The workplace includes the main office and field office of the Conservancy and those places outside the office where functions, sponsored by CLC, are held. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Any employee or individual covered by this policy who engages in sexual harassment or retaliation will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action (e.g., counseling, suspension, termination).

Abuse of Alcohol and Drugs
The unauthorized use, possession, or sale of alcohol or the use or possession of illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while on CLC business or on CLC premises is strictly prohibited. For purposes of this policy, CLC premises include all land, property, buildings, structures, parking lots, means of transportation owned or leased by CLC or otherwise being used for CLC business, as well as CLC sponsored events, wherever they are held. Reporting to volunteer functions under the influence of such drugs or alcohol is similarly prohibited, regardless of whether the alcohol or drugs were consumed off-premises. Violation of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Safety, Injuries, and Reporting Accidents
Volunteer safety is of utmost concern to Columbia Land Conservancy. Every volunteer is cautioned to properly use equipment, work carefully, use common sense, and follow all prescribed safety procedures and operating instructions. Any accident or injury should be reported immediately to Columbia Land Conservancy staff.
Appendix 2A: Public lands role description

Love to work outdoors and to help keep public lands safe and accessible? Join the public lands team! Public lands volunteers support the maintenance of public lands through assisting CLC staff with work projects at public sites during scheduled volunteer work parties.

This role works closely with the Public Lands Manager and the Public Lands Associate.

**Safety Note:** This role often involves hiking over uneven terrain and exposure to the elements. Please familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Waiver in the Volunteer Handbook to learn more.

**Schedule:** CLC hosts scheduled volunteer work parties from May through October. Many events are on Saturdays or weekday evenings. Most programs are two to three hours long.

**Duties and responsibilities:**

- All training and tools will be provided.
- Represent CLC in a friendly and professional manner.
- Track hours regularly using the SignUp platform.

**Helpful experience:**

- Knowledge of basic hand tools, including pruners and loppers.
- Basic plant and weed identification.
Love to work outdoors and to help keep public lands safe and accessible? Join the public lands team! Public lands volunteers help support the maintenance of public lands by serving as on-call help for the public lands team when needed, deploying to help with clean up after events like severe weather.

This role works closely with the Public Lands Manager and the Public Lands Associate.

**Safety Note:** This role often involves hiking over uneven terrain and exposure to the elements. Please familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Waiver in the Volunteer Handbook to learn more.

**Schedule:** These events will usually take place during the work week between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., typically following high wind or storm events. Volunteers will be emailed and texted when an event is scheduled, usually with two to three days notice.

**Duties and responsibilities:**

• All training and tools will be provided.
• Represent CLC in a friendly and professional manner.
• Track hours regularly using the SignUp platform.

**Helpful experience:**

• Knowledge of basic hand tools, including pruners and loppers.
• Chainsaw certification, which can be provided by CLC.
• Basic plant and weed identification.
Love to work outdoors and to help keep public lands safe and accessible? Join the public lands team! Independent public lands volunteers help support the maintenance of public lands by caring for land on their own schedule with projects such as chainsawing, removing invasive weeds, filling brochure boxes, and monitoring trails and infrastructure.

This role works closely with the Public Lands Manager and the Public Lands Associate.

**Safety Note:** This role often involves hiking over uneven terrain and exposure to the elements. Please familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Waiver in the Volunteer Handbook to learn more.

**Schedule:** Any time that’s convenient to you!

**Duties and responsibilities:**

- Before volunteering on their own, independent public lands volunteers should contact Patrick Knapp, CLC Public Lands Manager at *Patrick.Knapp@ColumbiaLand.Org* to be assigned work projects. Have an idea about how to keep public lands beautiful and safe? Let Pat know!
- Volunteers must bring their own tools.
- Represent CLC in a friendly and professional manner.
- Track hours regularly using the SignUp platform.

**Helpful experience:**

- Knowledge of basic hand tools, including pruners and loppers.
- Chainsaw certification, which can be provided by CLC.
- Basic plant and weed identification.
If the idea of helping a young person catch their first frog or making a new friend at the farmer’s market excites you – this is the role for you! Outreach and education volunteers assist with education programs and attend outreach events with CLC staff.

CLC provides all tabling displays and equipment. Volunteers are not expected to attend events or lead programs alone if they prefer staff support. However, opportunities to take leadership positions in these areas are available!

This role works closely with the Conservation Education Coordinator and the Communications & Outreach Coordinator.

Safety Note: This role may involve hiking over uneven terrain and exposure to the elements. Accessibility descriptions for all education activities will be provided in advance. Attending a tabling event may involve carrying boxes up to 25 pounds and remaining seated or standing for long periods of time. Please familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Waiver in the Volunteer Handbook to learn more.

Schedule: CLC attends outreach events and hosts most educational programs from May through October. Many events are on Saturdays or weekday evenings. Most programs are two to three hours long.

Duties and responsibilities:

• Represent CLC in a friendly and professional manner.
• Attend public tabling events such as farmer’s markets and community days. Pass on any questions, comments, or concerns received by visitors.
• Familiarity with the Frequently Asked Questions portion of the Volunteer Handbook.
• Support in-person public programs and ensure attendees are safe and comfortable.
• Track hours regularly using the SignUp platform.
Appendix 2E: Event photography role description

As a volunteer photographer, you help tell the story of CLC! Photography volunteers sign up to attend and document educational programs and/or go out to visit public lands and take photos on their own. Following each program or trek on the trails, volunteers upload their photos, which can then be used in CLC publications and social media – with proper credit, of course.

CLC asks that photography volunteers utilize their own equipment.

This role works with the Communications & Outreach Coordinator.

Safety Note: This role often involves hiking over uneven terrain and exposure to the elements. Please familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Waiver in the Volunteer Handbook to learn more.

Schedule: CLC can use photography volunteers all year round! CLC hosts most educational programs from May through October. Many events are on Saturdays or weekday evenings. Most programs are two to three hours long.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Document in-person public programs with photos and/or videos.
- Share imagery and videography with CLC.
- Volunteers retain all copyright to their work. CLC will provide credit to volunteers for any work used in social media, print publications, and other channels.
- Track hours regularly using the SignUp platform.

How to share imagery and videography with CLC:

- Send them via email to Volunteer@ColumbiaLand.org OR
- Upload them to LightRoom via this link: https://adobe.ly/3Txfnka.

If you are sending the photos via email, please include your name (if you’d like to be credited when we use them) and the location where they were taken in the body or subject of the email.

If you are uploading the photos via LightRoom, please either name your files with your last name and the photo’s location OR email to let us know you’ve done so with your name (if you’d like to be credited when we use the photos) and the location where the photos were taken.
As a volunteer photographer, you help tell the story of CLC! Photography volunteers go out to visit public lands and take photos on their own. Following each trek on the trails, volunteers upload their photos, which can then be used in CLC publications and social media – with proper credit, of course.

CLC asks that photography volunteers utilize their own equipment.

This role works with the Communications & Outreach Coordinator.

Safety Note: This role often involves hiking over uneven terrain and exposure to the elements. Please familiarize yourself with the Volunteer Waiver in the Volunteer Handbook to learn more.

Schedule: Any time that’s convenient to you!

Duties and responsibilities:

- Document public lands with photos and/or videos.
- Share imagery and videography with CLC.
- Volunteers retain all copyright to their work. CLC will provide credit to volunteers for any work used in social media, print publications, and other channels.
- Track hours regularly using the SignUp platform.

How to share imagery and videography with CLC:

- Send them via email to Volunteer@ColumbiaLand.org OR
- Upload them to LightRoom via this link: https://adobe.ly/3Txfnka.

If you are sending the photos via email, please include your name (if you’d like to be credited when we use them) and the location where they were taken in the body or subject of the email.

If you are uploading the photos via LightRoom, please either name your files with your last name and the photo’s location OR email to let us know you’ve done so with your name (if you’d like to be credited when we use the photos) and the location where the photos were taken.
Appendix 3: Constituent relations guide

What to do when interacting with an upset constituent. If you are volunteering with a CLC staff person, please let them take the lead on this! This information is provided so that you can feel comfortable if you’re in a situation like this on your own.

1. **Acknowledge what they are saying and check for understanding.**

   “It sounds like you are mad about the dog poop on the trails.”
   “You saw someone building a bonfire May 7 at 10:00 p.m. at Greenport?”

   You are doing this for three reasons:
   • To make the person feel heard
   • To get them to agree with you early in the conversation (this is a little bit of psychology that puts you both on the same team instead of positioning you as adversaries)
   • To make sure you have the facts straight

2. **Acknowledge the validity of their feelings.**

   “Wow, it must have been really scary when that dog jumped at you.”
   “I’m so sorry that screw stabbed your foot and you had to get a tetanus shot, what a terrible thing to experience.”

3. **Tell them what you can do to help or explain why you can’t.**

   There are three basic situations:
   • You can help with their problem. “I want to be on your email list.”
   • You can refer them to a CLC staff person or an outside partner to help with their problem. Take a note, read it back to them, and let them know someone on staff will follow up as soon as possible.
   • This person is just angry and wants to vent. This is the toughest one because all you can do is listen.

4. **If appropriate, give them a way to help you solve the problem together.**

   “I couldn’t agree more! I hate when I’m out walking and step in someone else’s dog poop. That’s why I decided to volunteer! We’re looking for volunteers to help with this exact situation, and it sounds like you’re passionate. Would you like to sign up?”
Tell them how you or someone from CLC will follow up.

If you can’t solve the problem yourself (and often, you will not be able to), let them know what’s next and provide a timeline.

“Okay, I’ve taken notes on this incident that happened. I’ll email our Public Lands Team today with you cc’ed, and someone will respond within a week. Please know this staff is on the trails most days, so that email response may take a little while.”

6. Escalate when needed and document when people are persistent, rude, or threatening.

“I don’t think continuing this conversation is productive. I have your phone number/email/etc. And will share with our President, who can get back to you.”

7. Take time to recharge your batteries.

Dealing with angry and upset people is demanding and draining! If you have an unpleasant interaction, take a five-minute break to do something that recharges you—take a short walk, make a cup of tea, or listen to upbeat music.
Appendix 4: Frequently asked questions: Public lands

Someone doesn’t like the other way people are recreating, but it’s not prohibited (music, radio, biking, horses).
People enjoy nature differently – some prefer a quiet hike, while others would rather listen to music at a picnic table. Some properties are better suited to different experiences. You might try visiting <<property x>> if you are more interested in an experience like <<this one.>>

We do have signage encouraging visitors to be respectful of others, and we hope you didn’t have an experience that caused you to fear for your safety – if so, please let us know.

Someone is concerned that increased accessibility will ruin nature.
<<Property>> is an exceptional place, and many people do enjoy it as it is. However, many people do not have the opportunity to enjoy <<property>> because of the lack of accessible trails. An essential part of our mission is an inspiring connection to the land; people cannot connect to the land they can’t visit. CLC believes that nature can be more inviting to visitors of all abilities and welcoming to people who relate to land in ways beyond hiking without threatening the scenic value or habitats of the site.

What is CLC’s hunting policy?
Hunting is integral to land management, especially in Columbia County, where deer spread Lyme disease, get hit by cars, and destroy forests. Hunting is also a way that many communities have traditionally connected to the land. Sign up to get hunting program updates at columbialand.org/hunting.

Why are the properties filled with the disgusting dog poop? Can’t you fine people?
We’re also upset at the dog waste left behind. Our staff and volunteers visit the trails daily with a five-gallon bucket picking up after folks – dog waste, dirty diapers, and used needles. This management includes mowing, tree work, land management, etc. Implementing something like a trail cam or penalizing system is not feasible – CLC staff are not law enforcement, and identifying the culprits would be impossible.

We have installed signage, created a program to reward those who pick up after their pets, and approached folks in person while on the trails and asked them to follow the rules. When we courteously ask people to respect the land and other property users, staff are verbally attacked or threatened. If you have ideas on how to handle this, we welcome your input. We are all trying our best with the time and resources we have. As a land trust working on Indigenous land, CLC takes responsibility for stewarding these properties thoughtfully, and we welcome anyone who wants to help. If you would like to join as a volunteer, please let me know, and I’d be happy to add you to the email list.
Frequently asked questions:  
Protected Land & Conservation Easements

Can you tell me if X land is protected, or Do you have a map of conservation easements in Columbia County?

You can find that information on the NY Protected Areas Database. They have an interactive map that you can zoom into to see what is protected.

I believe someone is doing something on conserved property that they should not be doing.

Easements are private properties not owned and managed by CLC. We monitor annually to ensure that the easement terms (specific to each property) are not being violated. We do not weigh in on particular management issues individually.

Frequently asked questions:  
Press

I’m a reporter. Does CLC have a statement on X?  
Send these to your staff point of contact. They will direct the reporter to CLC President, Troy Weldy.
Frequently asked questions:  
Land Use

Can CLC manage my land for me by doing <<X>>?
As a non-profit organization, CLC is not in a position to pay for individual land management activities. We can connect conservation-minded landowners with resources and would happily share more information with you.

I want to sell CLC this fantastic property – aren’t you interested? (Similar: the property on the market next door to my house is for sale and should be conserved – what will CLC do to preserve it?)
As a non-profit organization, CLC cannot purchase land out of pocket. Our Strategic Conservation Plan guides CLC’s conservation work. Every conservation easement is a forever commitment, so we must be strategic about conserving land.

Why is CLC taking all the high-value land off the tax rolls?
CLC makes PILOT (payment instead of taxes) donations on properties we own. Owners of conserved land continue to pay taxes.

Frequently asked questions:  
JEDI (Justice, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion)

Why does CLC do this? Stick to the birds and the bees!
An essential part of CLC’s mission is connecting people to the land. Historically, conservation and recreation have primarily been the province of upper-middle-class white people, and we cannot fulfill our mission and be of service to the community without acknowledging and learning from history and moving forward in a way that doesn’t repeat it.

CLC has embarked on a multi-year planning initiative to structure the never-ending work of integrating justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into everything we do. CLC is working internally to strengthen our commitments before we can safely have the capacity to listen and learn about the many communities our work impacts, for better and worse. We have already initiated conversations with many stakeholders in recent years that may not have traditionally been represented in our work, such as Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and immigrants. We’re excited to tell you about our work when our partner organizations think it benefits their needs and goals. Until then, we continue to quietly improve our commitments to these principles as we do not seek to be centered in this critical work.
Purpose and Goals

The Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) is committed to maintaining a workplace free from harassment and discrimination. Sexual harassment is a form of workplace discrimination that subjects an employee to inferior conditions of employment due to their gender, gender identity, gender expression (perceived or actual), and/or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment is often viewed simply as a form of gender-based discrimination, but CLC recognizes that discrimination can be related to or affected by other identities beyond gender. Under the New York State Human Rights Law, it is illegal to discriminate based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, race, creed, color, national origin, military status, disability, pre-disposing genetic characteristics, familial status, marital status, criminal history, or status as a victim of domestic violence. Our different identities impact our understanding of the world and how others perceive us. For example, an individual’s race, ability, or immigration status may impact their experience with gender discrimination in the workplace. While this policy is focused on sexual harassment and gender discrimination, the methods for reporting and investigating discrimination based on other protected identities are the same. The purpose of this policy is to teach employees to recognize discrimination, including discrimination due to an individual’s intersecting identities, and provide the tools to take action when it occurs. All employees, managers, and supervisors are required to work in a manner designed to prevent sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. This policy is one component of CLC’s commitment to a discrimination-free work environment.

Goals of this Policy:

Sexual harassment and discrimination are against the law. After reading this policy, employees will understand their right to a workplace free from harassment. Employees will also learn what harassment and discrimination look like, what actions they can take to prevent and report harassment, and how they are protected from retaliation after taking action. The policy will also explain the investigation process into any claims of harassment. Employees are encouraged to report sexual harassment or discrimination by filing a complaint internally with CLC. Employees can also file a complaint with a government agency or in court under federal, state, or local anti-discrimination laws. To file an employment complaint with the New York State Division of Human Rights, please visit https://dhr.ny.gov/complaint. To file a complaint with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, please visit https://www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination.
Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy:

1. This policy applies to all CLC employees, applicants for employment, volunteers, and interns, whether paid or unpaid. The policy also applies to additional covered individuals. It applies to anyone who is (or is employed by) a contractor, subcontractor, vendor, consultant, or anyone providing services in our workplace. These individuals include persons commonly referred to as independent contractors, gig workers, and temporary workers. Also included are persons providing equipment repair, cleaning services, or any other services through a contract with CLC. For the remainder of this policy, we will use the term “covered individual” to refer to these individuals who are not direct employees of the company.

2. Sexual harassment is unacceptable. Any employee or covered individual who engages in sexual harassment, discrimination, or retaliation will be subject to action, including appropriate discipline for employees. In New York, harassment does not need to be severe or pervasive to be illegal. Employees and covered individuals should not feel discouraged from reporting harassment because they do not believe it is bad enough, or conversely because they do not want to see a colleague fired over less severe behavior. Just as harassment can happen in different degrees, potential discipline for engaging in sexual harassment will depend on the degree of harassment and might include education and counseling. It may lead to suspension or termination when appropriate.

3. Retaliation is prohibited. Any employee or covered individual that reports an incident of sexual harassment or discrimination, provides information, or otherwise assists in any investigation of a sexual harassment or discrimination complaint is protected from retaliation. No one should fear reporting sexual harassment if they believe it has occurred. So long as a person reasonably believes that they have witnessed or experienced such behavior, they are protected from retaliation. Any employee of CLC who retaliates against anyone involved in a sexual harassment or discrimination investigation will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees and covered individuals working in the workplace who believe they have been subject to such retaliation should inform a supervisor, manager, or Troy Weldy, CLC's President. All employees and covered individuals who believe they have been a target of such retaliation may also seek relief from government agencies, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

4. Discrimination of any kind, including sexual harassment, is a violation of our policies, is unlawful, and may subject CLC to liability for the harm experienced by targets of discrimination. Harassers may also be individually subject to liability, and employers or supervisors who fail to report or act on harassment may be liable for aiding and abetting such behavior. Employees at every level who engage in harassment or discrimination, including managers and supervisors who engage in harassment or discrimination or who allow such behavior to continue, will be penalized for such misconduct.

5. CLC will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation that is fair to all parties. An investigation will happen whenever management receives a complaint about discrimination or sexual harassment, or when it otherwise knows of possible discrimination or sexual harassment occurring. CLC will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible. If an investigation ends with the finding that discrimination or sexual harassment occurred,
CLC will act as required. In addition to any required discipline, CLC will also take steps to ensure a safe work environment for the employee(s) who experienced the discrimination or harassment. All employees, including managers and supervisors, are required to cooperate with any internal investigation of discrimination or sexual harassment.

6. All employees and covered individuals are encouraged to report any harassment or behaviors that violate this policy. All employees will have access to a complaint form to report harassment and file complaints (the form can be found on the shared drive: \S:\Organization\Office and Staff (Forms, Lists, Meetings)\Staff & Office Forms\CombatHarrasmentComplaintForm 052023). Use of this form is not required. For anyone who would rather make a complaint verbally, or by email, these complaints will be treated with equal priority. An employee or covered individual who prefers not to report harassment to their manager or employer may instead report harassment to the New York State Division of Human Rights and/or the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Complaints may be made to both the employer and a government agency.

Managers and supervisors are **required** to report any complaint that they receive or any harassment that they observe or become aware of to Troy Weldy, President.

Should the complaint of harassment be against the President of the organization, the employee and/or manager should report the complaint to the Board Chair.

7. This policy applies to all employees and covered individuals, such as volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, vendors, consultants, or anyone providing services in the workplace, and all must follow and uphold this policy. This policy must be provided to all employees in person or digitally through email upon hiring and will be posted prominently in all work locations. For those offices operating remotely, in addition to sending the policy through email, it will also be available on the organization’s shared network.

**What Is Sexual Harassment?**

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based discrimination that is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity, and the status of being transgender. Sexual harassment is not limited to sexual contact, touching, or expressions of a sexually suggestive nature. Sexual harassment includes all forms of gender discrimination including gender role stereotyping and treating employees differently because of their gender.

Understanding gender diversity is essential to recognizing sexual harassment because discrimination based on sex stereotypes, gender expression, and perceived identity are all forms of sexual harassment. The gender spectrum is nuanced, but the three most common ways people identify are cisgender, transgender, and non-binary. A cisgender person is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Generally, this gender will align with the binary of male or female. A transgender person is someone whose gender is different than the sex they were assigned at birth. A non-binary person does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. They might identify as both, somewhere in between, or completely outside the gender binary. Some may identify as transgender,
but not all do. Respecting an individual’s gender identity is a necessary first step in establishing a safe workplace.

Sexual harassment is unlawful when it subjects an individual to inferior terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. Harassment does not need to be severe or pervasive to be illegal. It can be any harassing behavior that rises above petty slights or trivial inconveniences. Every instance of harassment is unique to those experiencing it, and there is no single boundary between petty slights and harassing behavior. However, the Human Rights Law specifies that whether harassing conduct is considered petty or trivial is to be viewed from the standpoint of a reasonable victim of discrimination with the same protected characteristics. Generally, any behavior in which an employee or covered individual is treated worse because of their gender (perceived or actual), sexual orientation, or gender expression is considered a violation of CLC policy. The intent of the behavior, for example, making a joke, does not neutralize a harassment claim. Not intending to harass is not a defense. The impact of the behavior on a person is what counts. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome conduct which is either directed at an individual because of that individual’s gender identity or expression (perceived or actual), or is of a sexual nature when:

- The purpose or effect of this behavior unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. The impacted person does not need to be the intended target of the sexual harassment;

- Employment depends implicitly or explicitly on accepting such unwelcome behavior; or

- Decisions regarding an individual’s employment are based on an individual’s acceptance to or rejection of such behavior. Such decisions can include what shifts and how many hours an employee might work, project assignments, as well as salary and promotion decisions.

There are two main types of sexual harassment:

- Behaviors that contribute to a **hostile work environment** include, but are not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual’s sex, gender identity, or gender expression. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory, or discriminatory statements which an employee finds offensive or objectionable, causes an employee discomfort or humiliation, or interferes with the employee’s job performance.

- Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. This is also called **quid pro quo** harassment.

Any employee or covered individual who feels harassed is encouraged to report the behavior so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be discrimination and is covered by this policy.

**Examples of Sexual Harassment**
The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited. **This list is just a sample of behaviors and should not be considered exhaustive.** Any employee who believes they have experienced sexual harassment, even if it does not appear on this list, should feel encouraged to report it:

- **Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:**
  - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee’s body, or poking another employee’s body; or
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation, or attempts to commit these assaults, which may be considered criminal conduct outside the scope of this policy (please contact local law enforcement if you wish to pursue criminal charges).

- **Unwanted sexual comments, advances, or propositions, such as:**
  - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target’s job performance evaluation, a promotion, or other job benefits;
    - This can include sexual advances/pressure placed on a service industry employee by customers or clients, especially those industries where hospitality and tips are essential to the customer/employee relationship;
  - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities; or
  - Repeated requests for dates or romantic gestures, including gift-giving.

- **Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or questions and comments about a person’s sexuality, sexual experience, or romantic history which create a hostile work environment.** This is not limited to interactions in person. Remarks made over virtual platforms and in messaging apps when employees are working remotely can create a similarly hostile work environment.

- **Sex stereotyping, which occurs when someone’s conduct or personality traits are judged based on other people’s ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look:**
  - Remarks regarding an employee’s gender expression, such as wearing a garment typically associated with a different gender identity; or
  - Asking employees to take on traditionally gendered roles, such as asking a woman to serve meeting refreshments when it is not part of, or appropriate to, her job duties.

- **Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as:**
  - Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials, or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace;
  - This also extends to the virtual or remote workspace and can include having such materials visible in the background of one’s home during a virtual meeting.

- **Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual’s sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, such as:**
  - Interfering with, destroying, or damaging a person’s workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfering with the individual’s ability to perform the job;
  - Sabotaging an individual’s work;
Bullying, yelling, or name-calling;
- Intentional misuse of an individual’s preferred pronouns; or
- Creating different expectations for individuals based on their perceived identities:
  - Dress codes that place more emphasis on women’s attire;
  - Leaving parents/caregivers out of meetings.

Who Can be a Target of Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. Harassment does not have to be between members of the opposite sex or gender. New York Law protects employees and all covered individuals described earlier in the policy. Harassers can be anyone in the workplace. A supervisor, a supervisee, or a coworker can all be harassers. Anyone else in the workplace can also be harassers including an independent contractor, contract worker, vendor, client, customer, patient, constituent, or visitor.

Sexual harassment does not happen in a vacuum and discrimination experienced by an employee can be impacted by biases and identities beyond an individual’s gender. For example:
- Placing different demands or expectations on black women employees than white women employees can be both racial and gender discrimination;
- An individual’s immigration status may lead to perceptions of vulnerability and increased concerns around illegal retaliation for reporting sexual harassment; or
- Past experiences as a survivor of domestic or sexual violence may lead an individual to feel re-traumatized by someone’s behaviors in the workplace.

Individuals bring personal history with them to the workplace that might impact how they interact with certain behavior. It is especially important for all employees to be aware of how words or actions might impact someone with a different experience than their own in the interest of creating a safe and equitable workplace.

Where Can Sexual Harassment Occur?

Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer or industry-sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees or covered individuals can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises, on personal devices, or during non-work hours.

Sexual harassment can occur when employees are working remotely from home as well. Any behaviors outlined above that leave an employee feeling uncomfortable, humiliated, or unable to meet their job requirements constitute harassment even if the employee or covered individual is at home when the harassment occurs. Harassment can happen on virtual meeting platforms, in messaging apps, and after working hours between personal cell phones.

Retaliation
Retaliation is unlawful and is any action by an employer or supervisor that punishes an individual upon learning of a harassment claim, that seeks to discourage a worker or covered individual from making a formal complaint or supporting a sexual harassment or discrimination claim, or that punishes those who have come forward. These actions need not be job-related or occur in the workplace to constitute unlawful retaliation. For example, threats of physical violence outside of work hours or disparaging someone on social media would be covered as retaliation under this policy.

Examples of retaliation may include, but are not limited to:
- Demotion, termination, denying accommodations, reduced hours, or the assignment of less desirable shifts;
- Publicly releasing personnel files;
- Refusing to provide a reference or providing an unwarranted negative reference;
- Labeling an employee as “difficult” and excluding them from projects to avoid “drama”;
- Undermining an individual's immigration status; or
- Reducing work responsibilities, passing over for a promotion, or moving an individual's desk to a less desirable office location.

Such retaliation is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. The New York State Human Rights Law protects any individual who has engaged in “protected activity.” Protected activity occurs when a person has:
- Made a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination, either internally or with any government agency;
- Testified or assisted in a proceeding involving sexual harassment or discrimination under the Human Rights Law or any other anti-discrimination law;
- Opposed sexual harassment or discrimination by making a verbal or informal complaint to management or by simply informing a supervisor or manager of suspected harassment;
- Reported that another employee has been sexually harassed or discriminated against; or
- Encouraged a fellow employee to report harassment.

Even if the alleged harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of harassment.

**Reporting Sexual Harassment**

Everyone must work toward preventing sexual harassment, but leadership matters. Supervisors and managers have a special responsibility to make sure employees feel safe at work and that workplaces are free from harassment and discrimination. Any employee or covered individual is encouraged to report harassing or discriminatory behavior to a supervisor, manager, or Troy Weldy, President. Anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to a supervisor, manager, or Troy Weldy, President.

Reports of sexual harassment may be made verbally or in writing. A written complaint form is attached to this policy if an employee would like to use it, but the complaint form is not required. Employees who are reporting sexual harassment on behalf of other employees may use the complaint
form and should note that it is on another employee’s behalf. A verbal or otherwise written complaint (such as an email) on behalf of oneself or another employee is also acceptable.

Employees and covered individuals who believe they have been a target of sexual harassment may at any time seek assistance in additional available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

Supervisory Responsibilities

Supervisors and managers have a responsibility to prevent sexual harassment and discrimination. All supervisors and managers who receive a complaint or information about suspected sexual harassment, observe what may be sexually harassing or discriminatory behavior, or for any reason suspect that sexual harassment or discrimination is occurring, are required to report such suspected sexual harassment to Troy Weldy, President. Managers and supervisors should not be passive and wait for an employee to make a claim of harassment. If they observe such behavior, they must act.

Supervisors and managers can be disciplined if they engage in sexually harassing or discriminatory behavior themselves. Supervisors and managers can also be disciplined for failing to report suspected sexual harassment or allowing sexual harassment to continue after they know about it.

Supervisors and managers will also be subject to discipline for engaging in any retaliation.

While supervisors and managers have a responsibility to report harassment and discrimination, supervisors and managers must be mindful of the impact that harassment and a subsequent investigation has on victims. Being identified as a possible victim of harassment and questioned about harassment and discrimination can be intimidating, uncomfortable and re-traumatizing for individuals. Supervisors and managers must accommodate the needs of individuals who have experienced harassment to ensure the workplace is safe, supportive, and free from retaliation for them during and after any investigation.

Bystander Intervention

Any employee witnessing harassment as a bystander is encouraged to report it. A supervisor or manager that is a bystander to harassment is required to report it. There are five standard methods of bystander intervention that can be used when anyone witnesses harassment or discrimination and wants to help.

1. A bystander can interrupt the harassment by engaging with the individual being harassed and distracting them from the harassing behavior;
2. A bystander who feels unsafe interrupting on their own can ask a third party to help intervene in the harassment;
3. A bystander can record or take notes on the harassment incident to benefit a future investigation;
4. A bystander might check in with the person who has been harassed after the incident, see how they are feeling and let them know the behavior was not ok; and
5. If a bystander feels safe, they can confront the harassers and name the behavior as inappropriate. When confronting harassment, physically assaulting an individual is never an appropriate response.

Though not exhaustive, and dependent on the circumstances, the guidelines above can serve as a brief guide of how to react when witnessing harassment in the workplace. Any employee witnessing harassment as a bystander is encouraged to report it. A supervisor or manager that is a bystander to harassment is required to report it.

**Complaints and Investigations of Sexual Harassment**

All complaints or information about sexual harassment will be investigated, whether that information was reported in verbal or written form. An investigation of any complaint, information, or knowledge of suspected sexual harassment will be prompt, thorough, and started and completed as soon as possible. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. All individuals involved, including those making a harassment claim, witnesses, and alleged harassers deserve a fair and impartial investigation.

Any employee may be required to cooperate as needed in an investigation of suspected sexual harassment. CLC will take disciplinary action against anyone engaging in retaliation against employees who file complaints, support another’s complaint, or participate in harassment investigations.

CLC recognizes that participating in a harassment investigation can be uncomfortable and has the potential to retraumatize an employee. Those receiving claims and leading investigations will handle complaints and questions with sensitivity toward those participating.

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations will be done in accordance with the following steps. Upon receipt of a complaint, [person or office designated]:

1. Will conduct a prompt review of the allegations, assess the appropriate scope of the investigation, and take any interim actions (for example, instructing the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made to refrain from communications with the individual(s) who reported the harassment), as appropriate. If complaint is verbal, request that the individual completes the complaint form in writing. If the person reporting prefers not to fill out the form, [person or office designated] will prepare a complaint form or equivalent documentation based on the verbal reporting;

2. Will take steps to obtain, review, and preserve documents sufficient to assess the allegations, including documents, emails or phone records that may be relevant to the investigation. [Person or office delegated] will consider and implement appropriate document request, review, and preservation measures, including for electronic communications;

3. Will seek to interview all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses;

4. Will create a written documentation of the investigation (such as a letter, memo or email), which contains the following:
a. A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
b. A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
c. A timeline of events;
d. A summary of any prior relevant incidents disclosed in the investigation, reported or unreported; and
e. The basis for the decision and final resolution of the complaint, together with any corrective action(s).

5. Will keep the written documentation and associated documents in a secure and confidential location;

6. Will promptly notify the individual(s) who reported the harassment and the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made that the investigation has been completed and implement any corrective actions identified in the written document; and

7. Will inform the individual(s) who reported of the right to file a complaint or charge externally as outlined in the next section.

**Legal Protections and External Remedies**

Sexual harassment is not only prohibited by CLC, but it is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

The internal process outlined in the policy above is one way for employees to report sexual harassment. Employees and covered individuals may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private attorney is not required to file a complaint with a governmental agency, you may also seek the legal advice of an attorney.

**New York State Division of Human Rights:**

The New York State Human Rights Law (HRL), N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State and protects employees and covered individuals, regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the New York State Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints of sexual harassment filed with DHR may be submitted any time within three years of the harassment. If an individual does not file a complaint with DHR, they can bring a lawsuit directly in state court under the Human Rights Law, within three years of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court.

Complaining internally to CLC does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The three years are counted from the date of the most recent incident of harassment.
You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR.

DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases receive a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found at the hearing, DHR has the power to award relief. Relief varies but it may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or repair the damage caused by the harassment, including paying of monetary damages, punitive damages, attorney’s fees, and civil fines.

DHR’s main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: www.dhr.ny.gov.

Go to dhr.ny.gov/complaint for more information about filing a complaint with DHR. The website has a digital complaint process that can be completed on your computer or mobile device from start to finish. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, and mailed to DHR as well as a form that can be submitted online. The website also contains contact information for DHR’s regional offices across New York State.

Call the DHR sexual harassment hotline at 1(800) HARASS3 for more information about filing a sexual harassment complaint. This hotline can also provide you with a referral to a volunteer attorney experienced in sexual harassment matters who can provide you with limited free assistance and counsel over the phone.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq. An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the most recent incident of harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred. If the EEOC determines that the law may have been violated, the EEOC will try to reach a voluntary settlement with the employer. If the EEOC cannot reach a settlement, the EEOC (or the Department of Justice in certain cases) will decide whether to file a lawsuit. The EEOC will issue a Notice of Right to Sue permitting workers to file a lawsuit in federal court if the EEOC closes the charge, is unable to determine if federal employment discrimination laws may have been violated, or believes that unlawful discrimination occurred by does not file a lawsuit.

Individuals may obtain relief in mediation, settlement, or conciliation. In addition, federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a “Charge of Discrimination.” The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at www.eeoc.gov or via email at info@eeoc.gov.
If an individual filed an administrative complaint with the New York State Division of Human Rights, DHR will automatically file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

**Local Protections**

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city, or town where they live to find out if such a law exists. For example, employees who work in New York City may file complaints of sexual harassment or discrimination with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Contact their main office at Law Enforcement Bureau of the NYC Commission on Human Rights, 22 Reade Street, 1st Floor, New York, New York; call 311 or (212) 306-7450; or visit www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml.

**Contact the Local Police Department**

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement, or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Those wishing to pursue criminal charges are encouraged to contact their local police department.

**Conclusion**

The policy outlined above is aimed at providing employees at CLC and covered individuals an understanding of their right to a discrimination and harassment-free workplace. All employees should feel safe at work. Though the focus of this policy is on sexual harassment and gender discrimination, the New York State Human Rights law protects against discrimination in several protected classes, including sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, race, creed, color, national origin, military status, disability, pre-disposing genetic characteristics, familial status, marital status, criminal history, or domestic violence survivor status. The prevention policies outlined above should be considered applicable to all protected classes.