

## **OCCA HONORS AREA RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES**

COOPERSTOWN – Otsego County Conservation Association has announced that Al Sosa is the recipient of its 2011 Conservationist of the Year award. Sosa is being recognized for his dedication to bicycle and pedestrian trail building and maintenance, as well as for his leadership role in the fostering of natural resource appreciation and stewardship.

This year, OCCA will present three additional awards to businesses and individuals who have made a positive difference related to environmental protection, preservation or education in Otsego County

Golden Artist Colors, Inc. of New Berlin will receive the Business Conservation Award for keeping thousands of gallons of paint from landfill disposal for the last 13 years; Karen Sheckells of Friends of Glimmerglass State Park, Inc. has earned Special Recognition for Environmental Excellence for increasing and enhancing community awareness and participation in a diverse array of environmental education events; and the "Green Business" Award will be given to Bassett Medical Center, Cooperstown for its initiatives to reduce, reuse, recycle or manage waste in more sustainable ways and to increase energy efficiency in existing or new processes.

Award recipients will be honored at OCCA's Annual Dinner, to be held on Friday, November 18 at the Holiday Inn Oneonta/Cooperstown, 5206 State Highway 23 in Oneonta.

"We are delighted to have such a diverse group of honorees this year," said OCCA Acting Executive Director Darla M. Youngs. "Our award winners demonstrate in countless ways how both individuals and businesses can successfully work to protect and preserve our environment. More importantly, they're doing a great job of it."

Erin Heard, tributary strategy specialist for the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and outreach coordinator/river trail manager for the Headwaters River Trail, will give the keynote address at this year's Annual Dinner.

The Headwaters River Trail is a newly developed canoe and kayak trail on the Susquehanna River and its four major tributaries, the Chenango, Unadilla, Otselic, and Tioughnioga rivers. River enthusiasts from Broome, Tioga, Cortland, Chenango, and Otsego counties are working together to improve recreational opportunities on this trail, which offers hundreds of miles of navigable waters and 60 public access points. The Headwaters River Trail joins the Chemung Basin River Trail and Pennsylvania river trails to complete the entire Susquehanna River Trail system all the way to the Chesapeake Bay.

Heard's presentation will cover the history of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, how USC came to manage the water trail, the partnership process, what has been accomplished, and where organizers hope to go in the future. She will also talk about the Susquehanna Sojourn – a multi-day, group-oriented annual paddling event emphasizing environmental and cultural education – which will embark from Otsego Lake in the summer of 2012.

“OCCA has long envisioned a Susquehanna River Greenway Trail, extending from Cooperstown to the existing Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway. Erin’s expertise in partnership building and trail visioning and planning should inspire us as we continue to move toward making that dream a reality,” Youngs said.

OCCA’s Annual Dinner will feature a new Silent Auction component this year. Auction donations to date include: an original limited edition giclée print by David Kiehm of Dead Drift Studio; a two-hour barge tour of Otsego Lake (maximum 20 people); CSA package from Fox Falls Farm, New Lisbon; a pair of house seat tickets to “Wicked” on Broadway with signed poster; lunch for four at the Blue Mingo Grill; gift baskets from Savor New York, Exeter Veterinary Clinic, Big Sky Farms, and Man in the Moon Herbs; four passes to the Joseph L. Popp, Jr. Butterfly Conservatory; the expertise of a botanist during a half-day visit to your property; pottery, jewelry, artwork, and a host of other great services and merchandise.

All Silent Auction proceeds will benefit OCCA’s programs to protect and preserve the environment. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for the Silent Auction preview – dinner attendees are encouraged to bring their checkbooks, and to bid early and often! Items must be paid for and taken at the end of the evening unless other arrangements are made; cash or check only.

Annual Dinner menu choices are roast prime rib of beef au jus, chicken Kiev or vegetarian stuffed peppers. All selections include salad, vegetables, potatoes or rice, rolls, dessert and tea or coffee. There will be a cash bar at 6 p.m., followed by the dinner and program at 7 p.m. Reservations, \$35 per person, are required by Friday, November 11. For more information, visit [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org) or e-mail [admin@occainfo.org](mailto:admin@occainfo.org)

Otsego County's oldest environmental conservation organization, OCCA is a private, non-profit membership group dedicated to promoting the appreciation and sustainable use of Otsego County's natural resources through education, advocacy, resource management, research, and planning. For more information, or to donate, call (607) 547-4488 or visit [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org)