
CIVIC INSIGHTS

APRIL 2026 | ISSUE 3



APRIL ISSUE: EARTH MONTH

Celebrating Hudson Valley's incredible natural landscape and highlighting local preservation initiatives

CONTENTS

1 LETTER FROM YOUR AMBASSADORS

On our minds this issue...

4 SPOTLIGHT

Learn about the incredible work of Riverkeeper

7 EVENTS CALENDAR

Reflecting on prior events and what's to come...

9 AMBASSADOR UPDATES

Until Next Month!

2 FEATURE

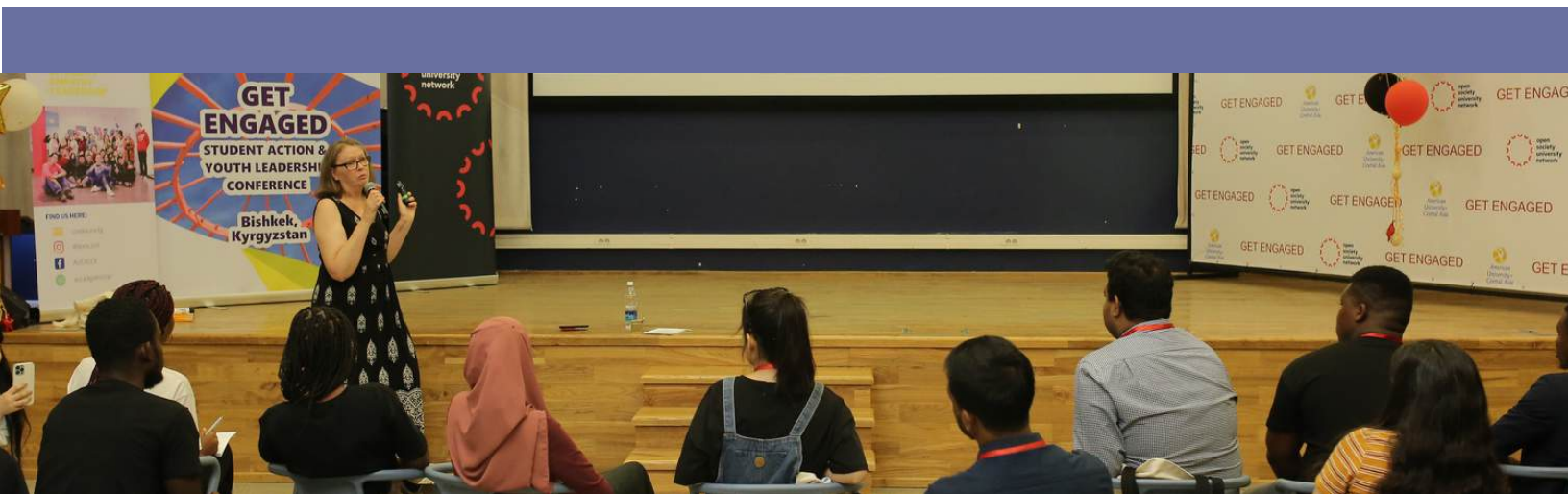
Learn about the Hudson Valley Power Authority Act!

5 TAKE ACTION

How you can get involved in local environmental action!

8 RESOURCES AND READING

Media insights from the past to the present...





Meet our Team

DAMIAN J. RAMIREZ

Prospective Politics and Medieval Studies Major, First Year

My passion for civic engagement lies in informing and educating others in ways that inspire meaningful action.

VISHAL PARKASH

Economics & Finance Major, Junior

My commitment to civic engagement stems from a people-planet-purpose vision, as it represents the perfect way to build bridges through thoughtful methodologies—exactly what we strive to do at Civic Ambassadors.

NADIA TRINIDAD

Politics and Human Rights Major, Sophomore

I have found civic engagement on a local level to be one of the most important forms of direct democracy - going beyond the electoral process.

MADISON JORDAN

Politics and French Studies Major, Sophomore

I love being involved in initiatives such as gender equity, where I get to put my own input into civic spaces and make a difference. A huge goal of mine is to encourage others to also put their beliefs into action.

ZLATA PASLON

Global and International Studies & Economics Major, Junior

I am interested in civic engagement at the intersection of global issues, education, and community advocacy.

CHELSEA GARCIA

Global and International Studies, Freshman

It often feels as though change can only happen on a federal level. However, being engaged in our communities tells us that that's a complete lie. We can see the impact we create first hand when we get involved locally.

[Visit Our Website](#)

Email - civic@bard.edu

Instagram - [@bardcce](#)

Civic Ambassadors Run by
the Center For Civic
Engagement

LETTER FROM YOUR AMBASSADORS



Rachel Carson

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the April edition of Civic Insights the Civic Ambassadors monthly magazine! Each month we publish a magazine focusing on a different theme, with the purpose of providing a lens into local civic actions, and how you can get involved. April is Earth Month, and rightly so, just walk by DTR and experience the breathtaking crab apple blossoms! In celebration, this edition focuses on local environmental protection initiatives as well as exciting

ongoing legislation that directly affects both residents of the Hudson Valley and its incredible natural landscape. The Hudson Valley features sites of immense biodiversity, like the Hudson River and the Catskills, freshwater systems like Sawkill and the waterfall, multitudes of migratory species from fish to birds, and an agricultural industry rooted in small-scale family farming! This makes it a critical site for environmental protections. Highlighting the work of local organizations in this issue, we hope to inspire you to join in!

Highlighting the work of local organizations in this issue, we hope to inspire you to join in!

Your Ambassadors

FEATURE:

HUDSON VALLEY POWER AUTHORITY ACT

Senate Chamber at the state Capitol in Albany

The Hudson Valley Power Authority Act (HVPA) is a proposal to create a public power authority for the Hudson Valley and eventually bring Central Hudson's electric service under public ownership. Instead of a private utility answering to shareholders, the plan imagines a publicly governed system meant to answer to residents, workers, and local communities. The bill is part of a broader push around "public power," which argues that electricity should be treated less like a profit-making business and more like an essential public service. In that sense, the act is not just about changing ownership on paper; it is about changing the basic purpose of the utility.

WHY SUPPORTERS BACK HVPA

Supporters say the proposal is a response to long-standing frustration with Central Hudson, the Canadian owned company that provides gas and electricity to over 99% of the Hudson Valley. The usual complaints are familiar ones: high bills, poor communication, service problems, and the feeling that customers have little real control over decisions that affect them. The deeper argument is that a private monopoly has weak incentives to put customers first when it can earn profits regardless of public dissatisfaction. The bill tries to answer that by building a system where reliability, affordability, and public accountability are the main goals.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

The most important structural idea in the bill is public ownership. Instead of one company controlling the electric system for profit, the utility would be run by a public authority. That matters because ownership changes the logic of the institution. A public authority can, at least in theory, focus on long-term service rather than quarterly earnings, and it can be shaped by public policy goals like affordability, grid modernization, and environmental transition.

POWER AUTHORITY

A central feature of the act is the creation of the Hudson Valley Power Authority, often described as HVPA. This would be the new public entity responsible for taking

over and operating the utility system. The authority is meant to function as a kind of regional public utility board, with legal powers to manage operations, plan investments, and oversee service. In practical terms, it would become the institution through which public ownership is carried out.

COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT

The bill does not just replace one owner with another; it also tries to build in public participation. One of its more distinctive ideas is the creation of community oversight structures, often described as observatories. These bodies are meant to give residents and stakeholders a formal role in watching how the utility works and shaping its priorities. That is important because public ownership alone does not automatically guarantee democracy; the bill tries to make accountability more direct by creating channels for input.

CLEAN ENERGY GOALS

The act is also tied to the energy transition. Supporters see public ownership as a way to accelerate cleaner energy decisions without being slowed by shareholder pressure or short-term profit concerns. In that framework, the bill is not only about lower bills or better customer service. It is also about aligning the utility with climate goals, grid resilience, and a more deliberate shift toward renewables and electrification.



“Supporters see public ownership as a way to accelerate cleaner energy decisions without being slowed by shareholder pressure or short-term profit concerns.”

WHAT CRITICS WORRY ABOUT

Critics tend to focus on cost, complexity, and risk. Buying out or replacing a major utility is expensive and legally complicated, and skeptics ask whether a new authority could actually deliver cheaper bills or better service in practice. There is also concern about governance. A public utility can become bureaucratic, politically contested, or slow to adapt if it is not structured carefully. So the challenge is not just changing ownership, but building an institution competent enough to run a regional grid well.

THE BIG IDEA

At heart, the Hudson Valley Power Act is a proposal to redefine electricity as a public trust rather than a private market commodity. It argues that the region’s energy system should be accountable to the people who use it, not only to investors. That makes the bill part infrastructure policy, part labor policy, and part democratic reform. Whether one sees it as a bold fix or a risky experiment, its basic claim is straightforward: power should serve the public first.



SPOTLIGHT: SCENIC HUDSON

West Mountain (Dover, Dutchess County), a site of Scenic Hudson's successful preservation efforts

Scenic Hudson is a Hudson Valley-based environmental organization working to protect land, restore ecosystems, and ensure that everyone, especially residents in urban communities, has equal access to nature. During Earth Month, I spoke with Duane Martinez, Director of Urban Conservation, about how Scenic Hudson connects environmental justice with community wellbeing.

Much of their work focuses on cities like Kingston, Newburgh, and Albany, where access to green space is often unequal. Through projects like Defining Urban Biodiversity, Scenic Hudson invites community members to work alongside scientists and environmentalists to study local ecosystems that are often overlooked.

Volunteers help collect data, complete surveys, and document wildlife, making environmental research more accessible and community driven.

One of their past restoration efforts includes the Fall Kill Creek project in Poughkeepsie, where Scenic Hudson helped organize cleanups, improve water quality, and create safer public access to the creek and surrounding green spaces.

Closer to Bard, Scenic Hudson also protects beloved places like Tivoli Bays, helping preserve trails, wetlands, and river access for students and local residents alike. Their work reminds us that nature should not be a privilege, but something every community can experience, protect, and enjoy.



GET INVOLVED

Visit the Scenic Hudson volunteer page at www.scenichudson.org/get-involved/volunteer/

TAKE ACTION



April is Earth Month, a time to reflect on our relationship with the environment and the responsibility we share in protecting it. Across the Hudson Valley, local organizations are leading important work in conservation, climate justice, and environmental advocacy. From protecting the Hudson River to building community resilience, these groups create meaningful ways for students and residents to get involved. Civic engagement begins with awareness, but it grows through action, whether that means volunteering, attending local events, supporting campaigns, or contacting elected officials. Here are a few organizations doing vital work across our region and ways to take action.



Protecting the Hudson River

Riverkeeper is dedicated to protecting the environmental, commercial, and recreational integrity of the Hudson River and its tributaries. Through advocacy, water testing, legal action, and community organizing, Riverkeeper works to safeguard clean water and fight pollution across the region. Their work connects environmental protection with public health and local community well-being.

Preserving Land and Public Access

Scenic Hudson, founded in 1963, has played a major role in protecting the natural beauty and ecological health of the Hudson Valley. By securing conservation easements, preserving open space, and creating public parks and trails, Scenic Hudson ensures that communities have access to protected landscapes while supporting long-term environmental sustainability.



Building Climate Resilience

Sustainable Hudson Valley works as a network hub focused on accelerating climate action through resilience hubs, clean energy transitions, and systems redesign. Their projects support local governments, schools, and communities in building stronger responses to climate change while creating more equitable and sustainable futures.

Grassroots Advocacy and Policy Change

Groups like Sierra Club and The Climate Reality Project lead volunteer-driven campaigns focused on environmental justice, clean energy, and public policy reform. Students can also contact elected officials through organizations like Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress and local civic groups to advocate for stronger climate policy, environmental protections, and sustainable development across the region.



EVENTS CALENDAR

Evergreen

Office Hours

Time: Sundays at 11am - 12pm

Location: Hegeman 102, Bard College

Weekly Tabling

Time:

- Monday 1:30 PM- 2:30 PM (Campus Center)
- Wednesday 2 PM - 4 PM and Friday 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM (Kline)



In Review:

This semester, Civic Ambassadors hosted several events focused on justice, advocacy, and community engagement both on and off campus. One of the major events was the panel discussion, "From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter: Continuing the Struggle," which brought together local organizers, community leaders, faculty, and young activists to reflect on the past, present, and future of racial justice in the Hudson Valley.

The conversation explored local civil rights history, housing and education equity, police accountability, and ways students can stay involved in community organizing beyond Bard.

We also hosted a Gender Equity Panel and Community Dialogue centered on gender justice, intersectionality, and advocacy, creating space for students and local voices to discuss support systems and broader civic movements connected to gender equality.

From the end of April through the beginning of May, Civic Ambassadors will also be tabling across campus to promote a bake sale and product drive supporting Grace Smith House, a local domestic violence shelter. Students are encouraged to donate hygiene products, household essentials, and personal care items while helping raise awareness and funds for survivors and families in need.



RESCOURCES AND READING

Action often starts with knowledge. Here are some interesting resources to inform yourself and engage with black media...



Winona LaDuke

- 1 ***Braiding Sweetgrass***
Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2013
Potawatomi professor Robin Wall Kimmerer combines scientific insight, storytelling, and memoir highlighting indigenous ecological knowledge and practice.
- 2 ***Hudson Valley Power Authority Act***
Check hudsonvalleypowerauthority.com for information and updates on how close this bill is to getting passed. Check if your representatives support it and give them a call!
- 3 ***Parable of the Sower***
Octavia Butler, 1993
This beautifully written speculative fiction novel meditates on climate change, social inequality, disaster, and regrowth.
- 6 ***The Nature of Nature: Biodiversity in the Hudson Valley***
NYDEC, 2025
This documentary celebrates the immense and unique biodiversity of the Hudson Valley.

- 4 ***Teaching a Stone to Talk***
Annie Dillard, 1982
This collection of Essays and poetry offers illustrious meditations on nature and meaning in life based on Dillard's encounters in diverse ecological settings.
- 5 ***New York Post on Holtec Controversy***
Shane Galvin, 2025
Stay up to date about the recent crisis where the international energy company Holtec plans to dump radioactive water into the Hudson River. [Read Shane Galvin's New York post article](#) to learn all about it.

AMBASSADOR UPDATES

CIVIC AMBASSADORS ARE ENDING THE SEMESTER WITH HIGH ANTICIPATION FOR WHATS TO COME! SEE WHAT THE TEAM HAS BEEN BUILDING BEHIND THE SCENES.

As the end of the semester approaches, Civic Ambassadors have been focused on planning upcoming programming and developing meaningful content for campus and community engagement. This month, we worked on event logistics, community outreach, and ways to strengthen connections between Bard students and local organizations throughout the Hudson Valley. Applications to become a Civic Ambassador will be opening soon, and we encourage anyone interested in leadership, service, and community engagement to apply. Thank you to everyone who has shared their time, energy, and ideas with us this semester, we are excited for what is ahead.

