

# America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Youth Conveys Environmental Message Through Song

By Heidi Kitlas, Development Director

In early August, as part of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative, listening sessions were held in Poughkeepsie and Hyde Park to provide an opportunity for the communities of the Hudson Valley to speak out about regional environmental issues. The Hudson Valley sessions, one of 25 held across the country, attracted hundreds, including environmental leaders and concerned citizens, providing an opportunity to establish new federal partnerships that will support a multitude of Hudson Valley environmental efforts. Senior officials from the US Department of Agriculture, Department of Interior and Environmental Protection Agency were on hand to hear what citizens had to say about our community and getting outdoors.

A special youth-focused Listening Session was held on August 5 in Hyde Park, New York at the FDR Library & Estate. Given Clearwater's role on the river and its powerful youth leadership programming, we helped organize youth from New York City to Albany to participate. The result was inspiring. The youth session was undeniably passionate, with over 300 youth arriving in Hyde Park to contribute their ideas and concerns about the environment.

Carlos Duran was one of the key youth participants, and is featured in this issue's Young Leader spotlight. "We need jobs for young people," Carlos stated, as he presented the youth recommendations on August 6th during the general listening sessions, "and not just jobs, but jobs that bring us into the outdoors. I think that

the outdoors is such a great way out of poverty. The outdoors is a great solution!"

After the session, federal officials were overwhelmingly impressed with the strong, diverse and engaged recommendations of the Hudson Valley youth. Many teens, such as Carlos, were united in their concern about the need for access to the outdoors, their environmental education programs that have had funding stripped or lost altogether, and their future in the green job movement – a future that they believe must be sustainable and green in order for their generation to succeed.

In the true spirit of our founder, Pete Seeger, Clearwater's Power of Song youth and the Urban Farmer's League of Newburgh, NY created new verses to 'This Land is Your Land' to voice their recommendations to President Obama. As a collaborative project, Clearwater partnered with Our Hudson Tomorrow and the Electronic Music Foundation to support their efforts and produce a video featuring these young leaders.

To view the video, visit Clearwater's website at [www.clearwater.org](http://www.clearwater.org), or the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater Channel on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/user/HRSloopClearwater](http://www.youtube.com/user/HRSloopClearwater). We ask that you please share Clearwater's video with others and help us get the word out!

Clearwater is proud of all the passionate young leaders who attended this session and who aspire to make a difference in our country. We applaud their leadership and determination to make our communities better places.



Carlos Duran at the AGOI with Tom Vilsack, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Below, Members of Clearwater's Power of Song take part in the filming of their version of Woody Guthrie's 'This Land is Your Land.'

