Remediation in the Ramapo Well Field of illegally dumped lead paint by Ford Motor Company.
Remediation

The excavation of paint and ecological restoration at this site took place in 2013-14. Ford Motor Company, after years of negotiation, agreed to a full clean up starting with this well field identified by Ford as Operational Unit One or OU-1. When it was completed this cost Ford more than $15,000,000 and resulted in the removal of more than 42,000 tons of pollution. The paint sludge was illegally buried here in the 1950s and early 60s. This material contains lead, plasticizers, volatile organic substances (VOCs) such as benzene, toluene, acetone, etc. Although the material has long since hardened, its decomposition could mean ground water access and contamination. Ford Motor Company’s decision to move forward with remediation and cooperate with the St. Lawrence administration sets a course of recovery for our watershed and for future generations.
Community Medicine Garden

Supervisor Christopher P. St. Lawrence

Deputy Supervisor Patrick Withers

Councilman Yitzchok Ullman

Councilman Daniel Friedman

Councilwoman Brendel Charles

The Medicine Garden was built by Ford Motor Company as the final step in remediating this well field site. Identified by Ford as Operational Unit One, this site was excavated in 2013 of more than 42,000 tons of hazardous waste originally dumped and buried here during the late 1950s and early 1960s. After long negotiations with the motor company, Supervisor St. Lawrence convinced Ford that a full clean-up of the well field was necessary, and in addition to this site a second site, known as Operational Unit Two further up the Torne Valley, is being cleaned in 2015. Reconstruction at this included a new topsoil layer, reforestation, and the garden. While in dialog with Ramapough Nation Elders, Dr. Chuck Stead learned that these tribal people (who have been the hardest hit by lead paint sludge contamination) hoped to see a medicine garden built on this site to help heal the earth. Stead, working with Supervisor St. Lawrence, convinced Ford of the significance of this garden. Ford is to be commended for returning to this watershed, cleaning up the damage done decades ago, and supporting this medicinal garden in respect to local traditional ecological knowledge. This project represents that which is possible when industry, government, and academia work together with the community.
Dedication Ceremony

On Sunday June 8th 2014 a gathering of friends and supporters was held at this site for the Medicine Garden dedication. Among other notable guests were Town Supervisor Christopher P. St. Lawrence, Ramapough Nation Chief Dwaine Perry, Sub-Chief Vince Mann, Mohawk Medicine women Amberdawn Lafrance and Alicia Cook, Micmac Educator Evan Pritchard, and Dr. Chuck Stead, along with members of the Ramapough Nation, Ramapo College students and community members. On that day a formal healing ceremony was held and then the first twenty eight plugs of native sweet grass were planted in memory of the elders.
Braiding sweetgrass for ceremonial use is part of an ancient healing tradition.
Sweetgrass braids for smudging and to take your prayers to the four winds.