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**BRIDGES “GET THEIR GOATS” AGAIN**

 **AUTHORITY’S 4-LEGGED CONTRACTORS RETURN**

After a successful debut in 2015, a herd of goats from Rhinebeck’s Green Goats will return to the NYS Bridge Authority for another summer of munching weeds and entertaining the community.

“The goats did an outstanding job last year,” Authority Executive Director Joseph Ruggiero said. “Not only are they cute and furry, they eat almost anything and make our job a lot easier.”

A dozen goats will reside under a section of the Walkway Over the Hudson Railroad Bridge and the Mid-Hudson Bridge for the next 12 weeks or so, clearing the land of poison ivy, weeds and all sorts of overgrown vegetation.

Authority Chairman Richard A. Gerentine said last year’s experiment was a success. “Not only did the goats clear hard to reach areas, they did such a good job that this year’s maintenance in those areas will be easier and cost less than normal.”

The goats were also a hit with the local community. Children in the City of Poughkeepsie were entertained by the constant activity, and adults in the surrounding area practically adopted the animals as part of their neighborhood.

“We received calls letting us know how the goats were doing and when the very curious animals strayed from the areas they were supposed to be in,” Ruggiero said; “Our maintenance crews were even getting calls about goats on the railroad tracks that had nothing to do with the Bridge Authority.”

The environmentally friendly approach provided surprising dividends. Areas cleared by the goats grew back much more slowly than previous attempts at brush clearing. The reduced maintenance required in these areas allowed the Authority to get additional work done in other areas under the bridges.

The goats are being provided by Green Goats, a Rhinebeck company owned by Ann and Larry Cihanek.

“We’re happy to be back in Poughkeepsie,” said Ms. Cihaneck. “It’s always a pleasure to bring our resources to an area that has done so much to support our efforts.”

In early 2015, tragedy struck the Cihaneks when 100 goats perished in a barn fire in Red Hook, NY during the coldest part of the winter. The community quickly responded and Green Goats had a new home before the year was out.

The public is welcome to see the goats in action however Ms. Cihanek cautioned against getting too close. “The goats love to eat poison ivy and other noxious weeds but that means the oils from the plants are on their coats and can easily be transferred to people.”

“We love our animals but they’re not pets, they’re a working herd. We ask that folks leave them alone so they can do their job,” Cihanek added.

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**Quick Facts about the New York State Bridge Authority**

* The NYS Bridge Authority operates the Bear Mountain, Newburgh-Beacon, Mid-Hudson, Kingston-Rhinecliff and Rip Van Winkle bridges and owns and maintains the structure of the Walkway Over the Hudson Bridge.
* The Authority is funded principally from bridge tolls and receives no state or federal tax monies for bridge maintenance and operation.
* NYSBA tolls are among the lowest nationwide for self-supporting transportation agencies and are actually lower, in real dollars, than they were in 1933 when the Authority began operations.