Reel a Promise

a (5) step guide: Connecticut Annual Report 2018





My connection to nature has taken me all over the world, from Greece and Iceland, to Tanzania and the Netherlands. Here in Connecticut, I've explored everywhere from the mountains of the Northwest Corner, to the marshlands at the mouth of the Connecticut River. But no matter where I am on the planet, the strong connection between people and nature is obvious. And at The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut, we're taking our work to scale to leverage that connection here and across the globe by tackling global priorities with local solutions.

The link to our environment influences everything we do at The Nature Conservancy. From trees providing fresh air in cities, to rising seas eroding shoreline neighborhoods, humans and the world around them are intrinsically linked. It's our job to find science-based, innovative solutions and take them to scale so that nature and people can thrive. The work we do in Connecticut is replicated all over the world, and I think that's one of the most important contributions The Nature Conservancy makes.

The Connecticut Chapter worked hard this year to affect how people view their role in the environment. We engaged residents of Bridgeport to install bioswales that filter rain water and plant trees to improve air quality, and worked with the Conservancy's global cities network to share knowledge and new ideas. Our resilience team hosted workshops for various communities

across the northeast, allowing municipal representatives to come together and craft solutions to the most pressing climaterelated issues they're facing. We worked with scientists in New York and Rhode Island to protect vital seagrass areas in Long Island Sound, analyzed human uses of the Sound in environmentally significant areas for the Blue Plan and advised our Florida colleagues on the dangerous algae bloom. And our first Nature Talks symposium brought together more than 200 people to discuss what is being done and what must still be done about climate change here and around the world.

There is no backup planet for us to live on. This beautiful world is our only home, and the only way to keep it beautiful is to live in harmony with it. As a supporter of The Nature Conservancy, I know you understand the value of Earth's natural wonders, so thank you for your support this past year and for valuing your connection to nature.

Fregord J. Ma

ON THE COVER: Pollinating bee © TNC **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Dr. Frogard Ryan © TNC (Michael Asphar)



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IMPACTING POLICY

This year, we worked at the State Capitol with elected leaders, partners and constituencies to advocate for funding and policies that address the causes of climate change. We fought proposals to reduce incentives for solar power, and successfully lobbied for legislation to increase Connecticut's Renewable Portfolio Standard, which will double the percentage of our electric power that comes from cleaner sources. We helped pass a bill with important updates to legislation we introduced in 2012 requiring consideration of sea level rise in state and local planning. It also requires state-funded projects in flood zones to be elevated an additional two feet above previous requirements and mandates that the state reduce its GHG emissions at least 45% below 2001's emissions by 2030.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Connecticut's resilience program continues to expand into other states, helping communities prepare for extreme weather, the future climate, and improved social and economic conditions. Our resilience team held an exuberant Community Resilience Building Workshop training session in the Finger Lakes of New York State with 10 municipalities across the Cohocton River Watershed. An additional 82 towns and cities were funded to go through our workshop process as part of Massachusetts' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program, meaning 148 or 43% of the

municipalities across the Commonwealth completed their own workshops. Here in Connecticut, Community Resilience Building Workshops were held in partnership with Sustainable Connecticut with communities new to TNC including Mansfield, Hamden, and Middletown. These efforts inform emergency plans, land use development policies, and open space protection to make communities more resilient to climate change.

We also reached out to the community

LETTING NATURE TALK

during our inaugural Nature Talks science symposium on September 28, titled Climate Game Changers, in collaboration with WNPR and Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Science. More than 200 people watched a riveting discussion on climate change mitigation and adaptation with Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, Lynn Stoddard, Executive Director of Sustainable CT, Jay Williams, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and our own trustee Dr. Gary Yohe, Wesleyan University Huffington Foundation Professor of Economics and Environmental Studies. The panel was moderated by John Dankosky, Executive Editor of the New England News Collaborative. Takeaways included educating, inspiring and engaging our communities in climate change discussions, utilizing the power of elections, and remembering that we are all interconnected around the world.

"What we try to do is change the zeitgeist enough that we can begin to take the dramatic action that's required to get real change."

Bill McKibben, 350.org, at the Nature Talks Climate Game Changers Symposium





2) Protecting Water This year, the Connecticut Chapter continued protecting the most vital lands and waters for nature and people. Keeping habitats resilient, connected and preserved offers long-term benefits to all wildlife, as well as people. In 2018, we collaborated with other organizations including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to conserve important habitat throughout this state.

PROTECTING FRESHWATER

In our continuing efforts to restore access to freshwater spawning habitat, we are working through a list of 60 priority dams where dam removal or fish passage upstream is a high priority. One of these projects is the Dolan Pond Dam fishway in Centerbrook on the Falls River. We expect to begin construction of this fishway this fall so that alewife can access upstream habitat. A second fishway project at the Mill Pond Dam, just upstream, is planned for 2019.

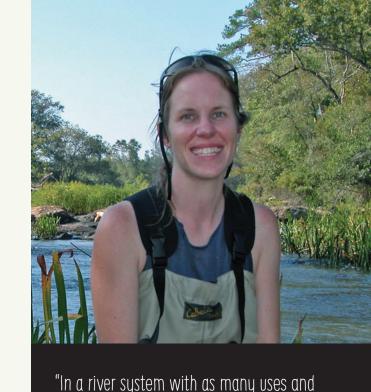
At the beginning of this year, The Nature Conservancy and partners in the Connecticut River watershed were awarded a \$4.98 million grant through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This five-year grant supports a partnership between TNC and 14 partner organizations in the watershed to protect land and water, use nature to help reduce the risk of floods, and manage nutrients and protect soil health.

PROTECTING LAND

In the Connecticut River watershed, we focused on facilitating potential additions to the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, developing projects to enhance floodplain function and health, and improve community resilience through municipal hazard mitigation planning. We are also hoping to expand both our Burnham Brook Preserve in East Haddam and Devil's Den Preserve in Weston with the addition of two priority parcels of land – these are two of our largest and most well-known preserves.

RESTORING FLOODPLAIN FORESTS

Floodplain forests naturally absorb and filter flood waters, which are an increasing threat with extreme weather events and rising sea levels. With this in mind, we continued planting disease-resistant elm trees at various locations along the Connecticut River this year. This project has been ongoing for years and has greatly improved our floodplain forest habitats, as well as helped increase the population of elm trees that have been decimated by Dutch Elm Disease.



users as the Connecticut River, there will be some difficult trade-offs if we want both a healthy ecosystem and benefits for people like clean energy and flood management. Understanding how dams impact what we care about will help us create a more sustainable future."

Applied River Scientist Katie Kennedy





OPPOSITE PAGE: Chantal Collier surveying eel grass © TNC (Adam Starke) **THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:** Holly Drinkuth © TNC; Trustee Mark Perkins helps reel in new specimens from the Sound © TNC (Andrew Benson)

STEERING THE BLUE PLAN FORWARD

This was an eventful year in the advancement of the Long Island Sound Blue Plan, a precedent-setting blueprint that will guide new uses of the Sound to avoid impacts to important environmental habitats and existing commercial and recreational uses. As a member of the Governor-appointed Blue Plan Advisory Committee, Director of Coastal and Marine Initiatives Nathan Frohling and recently hired Blue Plan Outreach Coordinator Christian Fox helped lead the charge to compile the science and engage stakeholders in development of the Plan.

PROTECTING ESSENTIAL MARINE HABITATS

We helped guide the launch of the Fishers Island Seagrass Management Coalition, an alliance of 19 island institutions and stakeholder groups embarking with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to co-manage seagrass – important and threatened habitat for marine life. The Conservancy is providing the Coalition with technical resources and planning support, which this year included surveys of the extent and condition of eelgrass and evaluation of vessel use patterns considered threats to the island's seagrass resources.

As part of a group of experts assembled by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Long Island Sound Program Director Chantal Collier assisted the State with completion of an inventory, analysis and evaluation of potential sites for designation as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) to enhance local stewardship and study of the Sound.

CREATING A HEALTHY SOUND

Too much nitrogen can fuel the growth of excess seaweed and toxic algae blooms that harm marine life and people. Here in Connecticut, we worked to raise awareness of water quality problems and solutions by helping citizens and policymakers identify and take steps to reduce nitrogen pollution. We launched the Long Island Sound Clean Coastal Waters Website in April 2018 (www. liswaterquality.org). The site shows impacts of nitrogen pollution from fertilizers and wastewater and provides information, tools and resources coastal communities can use to restore and protect clean, healthy waters – now and for future generations.

"People have done a lot of great work to clean up the Sound, but there's still much more to do, particularly in our coastal harbors and bays, which are so important for our enjoyment and economy. I'm thrilled to collaborate with hardworking communities to clean up and protect Long Island Sound."

Holly Drinkuth, Director of Outreach and Watershed Projects





OPPOSITE PAGE: Volunteers water newly planted trees at Hall Neighborhood House © TNC (Lucas Foglia) **THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:** Victoria Hoyland © TNC (Andrew Benson); TNC staff, volunteers, Bridgeport Mayor Joe Ganim and local residents celebrate the ribbon cutting of Bridgeport's first bioswale © TNC (Andrew Benson)

ENGAGING THE BRIDGEPORT COMMUNITY

In Bridgeport, we partnered with community leaders and residents to make the city healthier through our communitybased visioning effort known as Green Connections, which included designing and installing nature-based stormwater management projects, planting trees at parks and residences, and engaging volunteers in stewardship. This will reduce local flooding and stress on the stormwater system, make green spaces for public use more vibrant, and improve livability of neighborhoods and their families through increased shade and improved air quality. This summer, children from Hall Neighborhood House, community members from the East Side, and Bridgeport Mayor Joe Ganim joined us for the official opening of Bridgeport's first bioswales – a project coordinated by TNC. Our chapter also welcomed Environmental Engineer Victoria Hoyland this year, who will be lending her expertise to our urban and community resilience work.

CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The Nature Conservancy's cities network also brought the benefits of nature to cities all over the United States. Our North America Cities Network has now grown

to 23 cities with the addition of Houston and St. Louis. In Massachusetts, TNC is collaborating with communities in metro Boston to plant trees, install rain gardens and develop opportunities for green jobs. The Boeing Company granted the Puget Sound program in Washington \$1.5 million for planting trees in urban areas, and to help with reforestation efforts in Central Washington to recover from the Jolly Mountain Fire. Birmingham, Alabama, also completed four vacant lot designs, featuring a fruit orchard, a sunny meadow, a shady woodland and a rain garden, that are being promoted across the city to inspire more green space installations.

CITIES ACROSS THE GLOBE

Internationally, our program in Shenzhen, China, completed their Gangxia 1980 Green Rooftop Demonstration project, which showcases how a dense urban village can be transformed into a garden. Our Indonesia Program launched the Urban Conservation Leadership Council in Jakarta in partnership with Sinar Mas Land, the country's largest real estate developer, to explore innovative ways to engage the private and public sectors in bringing the power of nature to sustainable urbanization challenges.



"I've jumped in on several green stormwater infrastructure projects in Bridgeport. They are at various stages of design and construction, and my background [as a municipal engineer and civil engineer] was immediately useful."

Victoria Hoyland, the Connecticut Chapter's Environmental Engineer





THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to volunteers Jane Aldieri and Susan Kazanjian, we made great strides in the digitization of our New Haven office filing system. This project will ensure that our important records are retained safely, and the history of our chapter is never lost. Jane and Susan quickly became fixtures of our office, even attending one of the year's board meetings to meet our trustees.

Penny Howell-Heller is a 38-year member of The Nature Conservancy. She became a member the same year she began her career as a marine biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Penny retired in 2017 and has been volunteering for the Connecticut Chapter on the Long Island Sound Blue Plan, which aims to manage human and environmental uses of the Sound. This project is very important to her, and she's investing her time to ensure it stays on track. As members and supporters, sharing our office with these women has been beneficial to everyone.

OPPOSITE PAGE: This year's summer Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) interns explore Devil's Den Preserve in Weston © TNC (Andrew Benson) THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: Penny Heller © TNC; Staff from TNC and Mystic Aquarium perform an amphibian survey at Burnham Brook Preserve in East Haddam © TNC (Francine Monahan)

THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS

This July, we were joined by another group of interns from the Conservancy's Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) program, Rachael, Latiera, Phung and Angela. These students with an interest in environmental studies came from New York and Connecticut to spend the month working on conservation projects in support of the Connecticut Chapter. They also spent time getting to know the staff by working with different departments and attending a staff meeting. The students visited the former site of the Ed Bills Pond Dam with staff from our chapter as well as the CT DEEP, attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new bioswale in Bridgeport, and worked on trails at our Devil's Den Preserve in Weston. Students like these are the future of conservation and being able to encourage their interest in connecting to nature, as well as teach them new skills, is important to us.

You can't take the nature out of people and you can't take the people out of nature. Nature takes care of so many of our needs, and our volunteers and donors all help us look out for nature in different ways. With your help, The Nature Conservancy is strengthening the connection between people and our environment in Connecticut and all over the world.



"As a professional biologist, I learned that using the Earth's many resources to peoples' advantage also makes life a lot easier, but to be sustainable, that requires careful study and diligent stewardship. The Nature Conservancy is one of the best organizations fulfilling this role."

Penny Heller, The Nature Conservancy volunteer and loyal donor





REMEMBERING EUNICE GROARK

This year, the Connecticut Chapter lost a dear friend and dedicated supporter: Eunice Groark. She meant many things to many people, but to all of us she was an inspiration.

In addition to being Connecticut's first female Lieutenant Governor, Eunice, an accomplished lawyer, also served as Corporation Counsel for the City of Hartford. Leading came natural to Eunice. She served on The Nature Conservancy in CT's Board from 1995 to 2004. During that time, she stepped up and took on leadership roles, both as treasurer and chair. During her tenure, Eunice helped pull off the largest land deal in Connecticut's history – the Kelda lands project in which the State and our Chapter protected over 15,000 acres in Western Connecticut.

The Nature Conservancy in CT's family of trustees, staff and supporters will never forget Eunice, and through her work she will live on in all our hearts.

OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Aaliyah Sloan-Nathan and her father William Nathan fish off the coast of Bridgeport © TNC (Lucas Foglia); A mother and daughter stand by a newly planted tree in their Bridgeport neighborhood © TNC (Lucas Foglia); Trustees, staff and supporters meet with Representative John Courtney during TNC's Advocacy Day © TNC (Andrew Benson); TNC staff member Alex Soucy looks for aquatic life during an amphibian survey at Burnham Brook Preserve in East Haddam © TNC (Francine Monahan): Chair Frances Ashley and Trustee Allen Rosenshine at the Nature Talks climate symposium © TNC (Steven Laschever); Farms near the Sunny Valley Preserve in New Milford, CT © TNC (Wayne Woodard); A resident of Seaside Village in Bridgeport surveys the community rain garden © TNC (Lucas Foglia) THIS PAGE: Residents of Seaside Village in Bridgeport weeding the community rain garden © TNC (Lucas Foglia); TNC holds a Coastal Resilience Building Workshop in New London © TNC (Adam Whelchel); LEAF interns and TNC staff erect protective fences around piping plover nesting sites © TNC (Amanda Jacobson); Eunice Groark © TNC (Francine Monahan)





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The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut wishes to thank the following donors for their support and service in fiscal year 2018. This list represents those who have contributed at least \$1,000 between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018, to the Conservancy's local, national GLOBAL CHALLENGES and international conservation work.

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The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut 55 Church Street, Third Floor New Haven, CT 06510-3029 nature.org/connecticut

(203) 568-6270 ct@tnc.org







The mission of The **Nature Conservancy is** to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

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THIS PAGE, TOP: Connecticut Board of Trustees joined by staff for a board meeting on Long Island Sound. IN BACK (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Treasurer Michael L. Zea, Trustee Mark A. Perkins, Esq., Trustee Eunice Burnett, Dir. of Coastal and Marine Initiatives Nathan Frohling, Yale Board Fellow Shea Flanagan, Board Chair Frances C. Ashley, Secretary John Pritchard, Esq., Vice Chair Elizabeth McCance, Ph.D., Trustee Allen Rosenshine, State Director Frogard Ryan, Trustee David K. Skelly, Ph.D. In FRONT (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Trustee John Levinson, Trustee James Prosek, Dir. of Long Island Sound Program Chantal Collier, Dir. of Finance Ann Budzynski, Dir. of Conservation Outreach Programs Holly Drinkuth. Trustees not pictured: Vice Chair Laura di Bonaventura, Vice Chair David Jaffe, Trustees Rodrigo Canales, Daniel C. Esty, Esq., Ph.D., Kiki Kennedy, MD, Philip O. Livingston, Esq., Gary Yohe, Ph.D., Yale Board Fellow Hope Connolly THIS PAGE, BOTTOM: The Nature Conservancy in the lobby of their New Haven Office. BACK ROW (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Chantal Collier, Rick Reichert, Gary Kevit, Robert Frost, Laura Weinberg, Ed Whitaker, Shelley Green, Cary White, Sarah Pellegrino, Adam Whelchel, Cynthia Fowx, Chris Raiford, Kristie Giannetto. FRONT ROW (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Anthony Marcucio, Ann Budzyinski, Victoria Hoyland, Alex Soucy, Holly Drinkuth, Drew Goldsman, Cassandra James, Andrew Benson, Sally Harold, David Sutherland, Frogard Ryan, Francine Monahan, David Gumbart, Marie Orsini Rosen. Missing: Christian Fox, Nathan Frohling, Katie Kennedy, Ratan Koneru, Mark Mainieri, Christian Marks, Martha Rice, Laura Shail, Amy Singler, Wayne Woodard. © TNC (Andrew Benson)

