



NEWS FROM THE ADIRONDACKS FALL/WINTER 2022

Adirondack Update

The Nature
Conservancy
New York



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY:

Using Technology for a Climate-Resilient Future
A Life of Conservation: Margot and John Ernst
Helping Families Help Forests
Remembering Tim Barnett

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Begin your adventure
nature.org/newyork



© John DiGiacomo

ADIRONDACK BOARD MEMBERS

Sarah Underhill

Chair

Emily L. Brittan

Vice Chair

Charles O. Svenson

Treasurer

Peter S. Paine, Jr.

Secretary

Frances Beinecke

Stephen H. Burrington

Kris Covey

Hannah Darrin

Peter Falco

Stephen McCarthy

Elizabeth McLanahan

Steven M. Tadler

Amy Vedder, Ph.D.

Takeyce Walter



The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) international membership organization. Its mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Nature Conservancy meets all of the Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is a national charity watchdog affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

Printed on 100% PCW recycled, process chlorine-free paper, creating the following benefits:

3.8
trees preserved
for the future

286.1
gallons water
saved

555.3
lbs. CO₂
prevented

Telling the Full Adirondack Story



© Kara Jackson

We recently spent a day at Follensby with professor Robin Kimmerer, who teaches at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and her ethnobotany class. We have much to learn as we begin to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge as an important framework for understanding the environment as a source of ideas for ecosystem management, conservation biology and ecological restoration.

The same day was PhD student Stephanie Morningstar's first day of fieldwork. Her work on Biocultural Re-Story-ation lies at the heart of our partnership with the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. It also marked a big step in our journey to uncover and tell the full Follensby story.

Stephanie has written, "Follensby Pond and the Philosophers' Camp have inspired generations of artists, writers,

thinkers, ecologists and conservationists. But, before it was Follensby Pond, and still, this place has been and will always be a part of the Eastern Door and the Kanienkehaka are the keepers of it. Now, it will feel the rhythm of our drums, our songs, our feet and our laughter. We will philosophize in our own way, we will Re-story this land, from our Good Minds, and listen to what the land has to say."

Stephanie's words bring even more meaning and significance to our long-standing efforts to preserve Follensby and to build deeper relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities. Lasting conservation must actively involve people and partners linked to the natural systems we seek to protect, and their voices must be at the center of what we do.

We are filled with gratitude for this opportunity to expand our approach to conservation that is currently deeply rooted in Western science. Robin writes of employing "two-eyed seeing" that draws on the wisdom of both Indigenous and scientific knowledge to support our shared goals of environmental sustainability. It is the way forward as we find paths to solve climate change and biodiversity loss. We thank you for joining us on this journey.

All the best,

Peg R. Olsen
Director



From the shores of Lake Champlain to the peaks of the Adirondacks, we use pioneering technology to help nature thrive. © Harley Soltes

Mapping a Climate-Resilient Future

The Nature Conservancy is leading the way with cutting-edge geographic and automated technology to chart a course for a more climate-resilient and connected Adirondack region.

Since the Conservancy began monitoring lands and waters across New York state in 1951, maps have been crucial to protection and restoration. Now, we are using geospatial data—any data that can be mapped—and technology to gain a better understanding of the Earth's systems and how we can protect them.

Using “spatial action mapping,” we are identifying which conservation techniques to prioritize—land protection, invasive species management, flood prevention, water quality restoration and so on—to ensure that our lands and waters are as healthy as they can be. This innovative method helps our partners integrate the value of nature into decision-making—from land trusts to municipal planners to federal government agencies. We are making this data widely available to analyze and share at the scale and speed required to support critical conservation decisions across both the Adirondacks and the United States.

For instance, by mapping the long-term climate flow of wildlife (where wildlife will need to move as the climate changes), we can model connectivity in our Adirondack landscapes and identify priority land parcels for protection, adding multiple layers of conservation techniques to ensure there are a wide range of benefits for wildlife and for communities.

“Monitoring the lands and waters across the Adirondacks and New York state is a big task, so we also track conditions through automated technology,” says Peg Olsen, Adirondack director. “By using remote sensing satellites to detect changes in the landscape, we gain a much deeper and comprehensive understanding of our natural world and how climate change is impacting it.”

This technology also serves as an early monitoring system to detect invasive species such as hemlock woolly adelgid. While airplanes and satellites cannot detect the insect itself, we can use them to detect changes in tree health that may be associated with the adelgid's presence. This information can help strategically deploy on-the-ground surveyors and expand early-detection efforts.

“With this powerful combination of state-of-the-art spatial action mapping, geospatial data and automated technology, we are harnessing everything in our toolkit to protect and connect our ecosystems—especially as the climate changes,” continues Olsen.



Conservationists Margot and John Ernst, whose lifelong interest in the histories and cultures of Native people has fueled their work, pictured at Bears Ears National Monument, an ancient Pueblo site in southeastern Utah. © Courtesy of John Ernst

Passionate People Bringing Indigenous Perspectives to Conservation

Meet Margot and John Ernst—conservationists through and through—who helped us protect 13,500 acres as part of our historic Heart of the Adirondacks project. Now they're supporting our important work with Indigenous Peoples, including our partnership with the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. We sat down with John to get his perspectives on conservation.

The Nature Conservancy's goal is to ethically and effectively support and partner with Indigenous Peoples. What draws you to this work?

Years ago, through a friend who is an artist, Margot and I learned about the intricacies of Navajo weaving—some of the most highly regarded textiles in the world. That led us in multiple directions. We joined the Navajo Sheep Project at Utah State University and made several trips to the Navajo reservation. Our fascination with this artform compelled us to support the effort to return old-type Churro sheep to Navajo weavers, whose livestock was seized in the 1860s. They had depended upon this hand-spun, high-quality wool for generations.

We also became founding supporters of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian campaign to construct a new building in Washington, D.C., representing Native people on a national stage. Ultimately, our interest in weaving led to the formation of a collection of early classic Navajo blankets, some of which hang today in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where for the first time, Native art, curated by a Native professional, is being exhibited as mainstream American art.

Seeking ways to support a Native presence at Harvard University, we joined the university's Native American Program, which led to the formal adoption of Native studies as a permanent part of the curriculum—400 years after Harvard's founding as an institution dedicated to educating “Native and English youth.”

Recently, we had the opportunity to meet Robin Kimmerer from the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment and read her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which is a life-changing work. Kimmerer inspired us to have a richer and deeper perception of the natural world and of people's place in it.

To work with Indigenous Peoples, we need to understand history and multigenerational trauma, because land is at the core of all that happened and can be the core of healing. What does land conservation mean to you?

For me, an understanding of land conservation was partly intuitive and partly derived from the responsibility of being a steward. My father and grandfather placed the first conservation easement in New York state on an incredibly beautiful piece of Adirondack wilderness, which protected the shoreline of Elk Lake. Later, Margot and I donated an easement to the state to conserve the remaining acreage. Five generations of our family have loved and cherished this land, and it is open to Elk Lake Lodge guests who have their own generational relation to it. It is also the take-off point for state trails into the Adirondacks' High Peaks.

The key, in my mind, is the idea articulated by Kimmerer and others that one does not own the land but rather that one shares it with all beings, human and animal, plant and inanimate. Each has their place in protecting and enhancing the gift we have all received. I believe this completely. Historically, the theft of Native land in this country is a shameful crime that we must acknowledge. To Native people with whom I have spoken or whose writings I have read, land is not simply real estate or a commodity to be consumed, it is their place of origin, their spiritual core. If we can understand and respect this deep connection, I believe we will be the better for it.

Justice for the Land

The Nature Conservancy is partnering with the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment (CNPE) to embrace a “two-eyed” way of seeing that bridges traditional ecological knowledge and Western science to inform conservation. CNPE is part of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and is led by Robin Kimmerer. This partnership will strengthen relationships among the CNPE, TNC and Indigenous Nations; advance land justice; and co-develop a new narrative on TNC preserves that restores Indigenous Peoples' engagement with their ancestral homelands and gives a voice to their perspectives. By partnering with the Center, we can advance our work with Indigenous Peoples across the state while developing tools and protocols that will be shared across TNC and with Indigenous communities, land trusts and the public.

The CNPE held a Justice for the Land gathering in 2019 that, in many ways, planted the seeds for our partnership. This year's iteration, held at Blue Mountain Lake in September, was funded by our partnership grant to support the Center as a leader in the Land Justice Movement. The CNPE is training conservation professionals, engaging with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, and generally advancing the movement in collaboration with other conservation and land justice partners.

Helping Families Help Forests

Nature plays a big role in addressing climate change. Healthy forests, wetlands and other natural systems have enormous potential to absorb and store carbon. However, our forests face numerous threats, and without conservation and proper management, these valuable carbon sinks will disappear.

We have the chance to harness nature's potential and mitigate carbon emissions by protecting our trees—and we're doing it by teaming up with family landowners. Along with the American Forest Foundation, we launched the Family Forest Carbon Program, which focuses on smaller, private landowners who want to prioritize sustainable land management. The program, which takes a scientifically proven, climate-friendly approach, is available to family and individual woodlot owners with as few as 30 acres and provides expert consultation with foresters. As 75% of New York wooded lands are privately held, this program has immense potential to help collectively improve forest health and boost carbon sequestration.

“We need clean energy technology to slow climate change, and we also need healthy woodlands,” says Michelle Brown, The Nature Conservancy's senior conservation scientist in New York. “Science shows us that natural climate solutions can deliver over a third of the emission reductions we need by 2030. And it's a solution with multiple benefits: biodiversity conservation, clean air, clean water, mental health.”

She adds, “Solving the climate emergency is huge and urgent. And when you think about all the other benefits, employing natural climate solutions is just a no-brainer.”

The Family Forest Carbon Program launched in eastern New York and includes the important Adirondacks to Green Mountains linkage, where we are focused on connecting core lands to ensure that wildlife have room to roam as climate change intensifies. As the program expands throughout the state, it's important to make sure all private owners have access to it.

“We are trying to reduce barriers so any eligible landowner can enroll,” says Chris Zimmerman, the Conservancy's New York forest restoration lead. “The program can help keep trees healthy and resilient over the long term, and by protecting and improving the health of New York's woodlands, they can keep removing carbon from the air naturally.”

The climate crisis is complex, but we're leveraging cutting-edge science, strong partnerships and effective environmental policy to mitigate it. By conserving and restoring our trees, we can enhance the power of our natural systems to help create a more vibrant future.



Remembering Tim Barnett, a Force for Nature: by Peg Olsen

Our dear friend, colleague and mentor Tim Barnett passed away peacefully at home in August. Tim was a force of nature for conservation. During his 46 years at The Nature Conservancy, he changed the map of the Adirondacks, conserving close to a quarter of a million acres of important habitat for wildlife and opening up countless recreational opportunities for all to enjoy.

While the numbers do a good job describing his achievements, there is another aspect of Tim's legacy that continues to inspire us.

By 1997, Tim had helped to protect many of the iconic places we know today and offered a model for landscape conservation soon to be employed across our organization. That year, Tim took time off from his job as the first director of the Adirondack Chapter to work with the World Bank, applying his expertise to the management of natural areas in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. While there, he suffered a catastrophic neck injury which left him wheelchair-bound the rest of his life.

That did not stop Tim. Relentlessly cheerful, charismatic and committed to conservation, he resumed his career at the Conservancy working with the Adirondack team and others on countless initiatives. Tim was one of a handful of people who both participated in and witnessed the growth of the Conservancy from a land trust to the global organization that it is today, and he always brought to the table good will, wisdom and perspective until his retirement in 2018.



It's impossible to count how many careers in conservation he launched and how many Adirondack residents and visitors have and will continue to benefit from his tireless work. Always top of mind for Tim was preserving the Adirondacks while making it work for people too.

He would tell you that he had little to do with his success, and that his real talent was hiring good people who were smarter than he. I recall once asking him about his decades-long career, the landscape he protected, the legacy he etched permanently into the Adirondacks. He simply remarked, "I'm just in awe of how much fun I had."

Tim was our fearless leader—an Adirondack treasure and he will forever remain our North Star.



© Ken Aaron

 facebook/tncny
 twitter@nature_ny



© Takeyce Walter

Black Dimensions in Art

Thanks to an initiative led by Adirondack trustee and acclaimed artist Takeyce Walter, we partnered with Black Dimensions in Art and the Macedonia Baptist Church to offer an Art and the Environment program to Albany students. Walter taught about painting landscapes en plein air, and students learned about the importance of natural landscapes from Conservancy staff. They also visited the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center and the Christman Sanctuary outside Albany and spent a day on the Lake George Association's floating classroom.