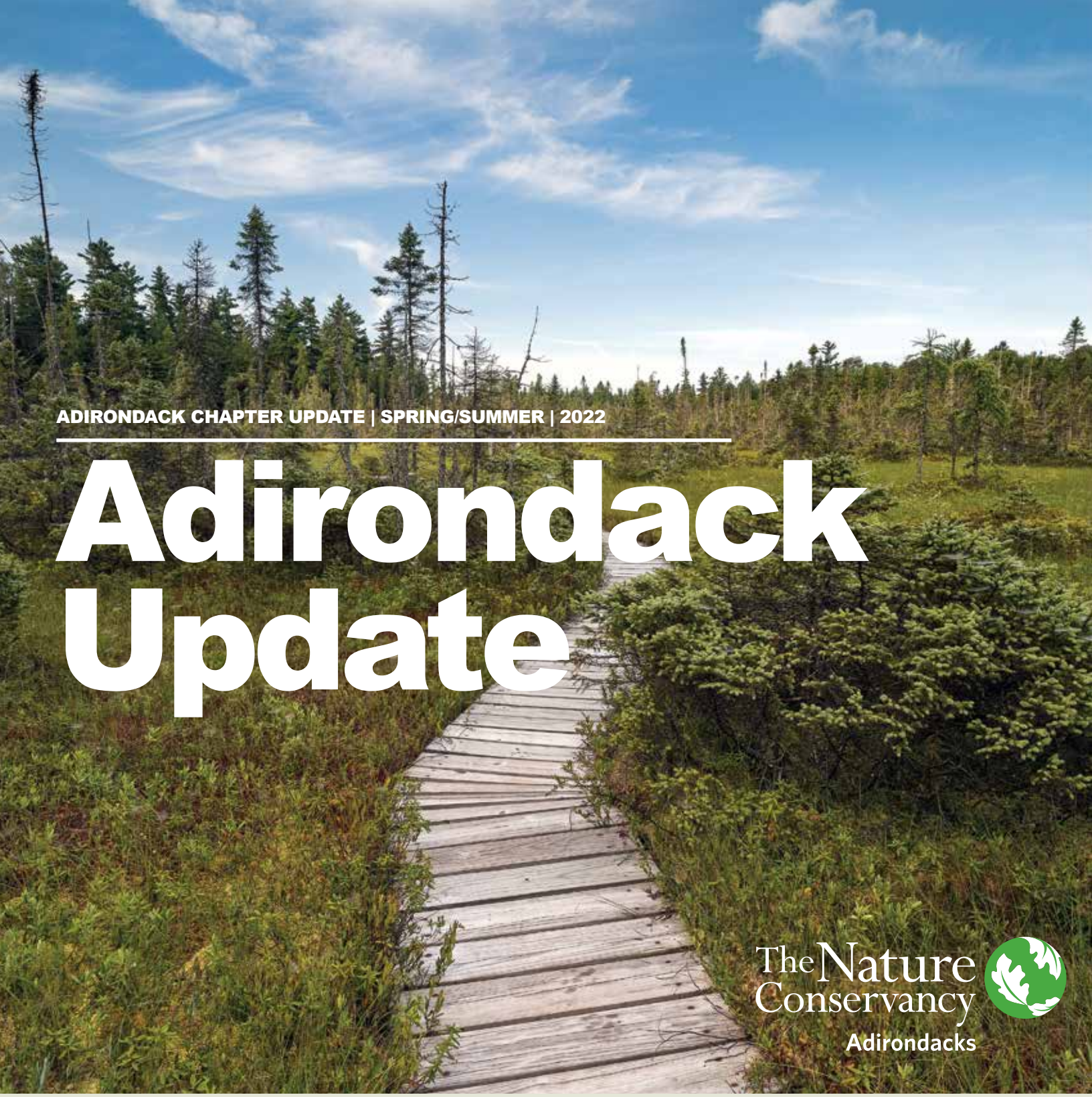


ADIRONDACK CHAPTER UPDATE | SPRING/SUMMER | 2022

Adirondack Update

The Nature Conservancy
Adirondacks

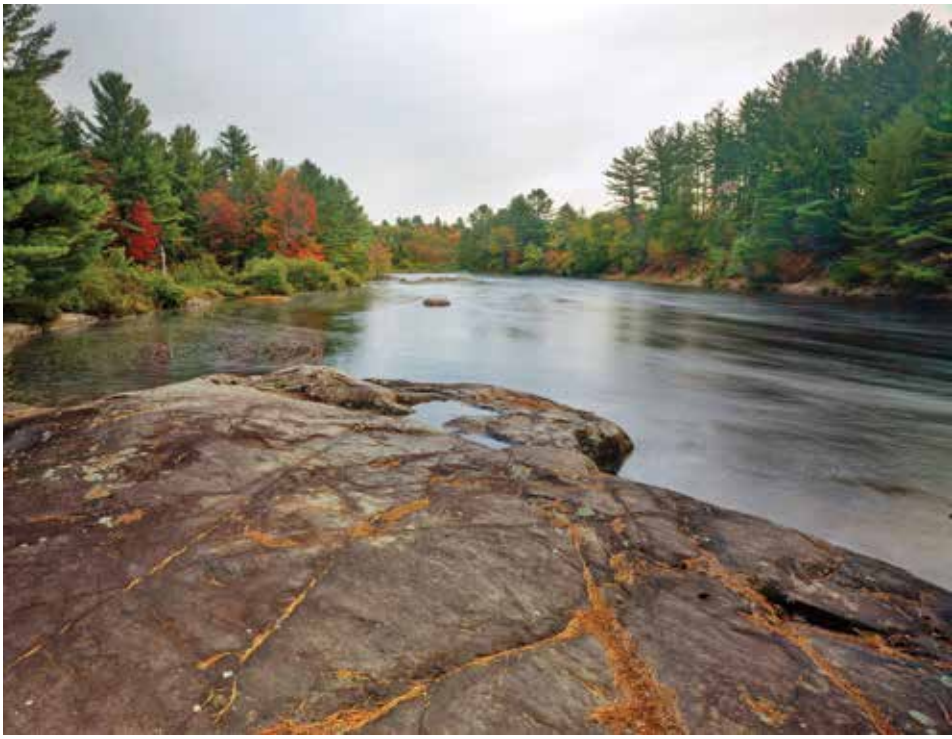
CONNECT WITH NATURE

See dozens of bird species from a peatland boardwalk at our Spring Pond Bog Preserve. Start your adventure here: nature.org/nypreserves

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Wildflowers have emerged from the forest floor, and field season has begun. Spring and early summer in the Adirondacks are a time of renewal and growth, an expansive period filled with possibility. There's much in this world causing worry and fear, including the climate crisis, but I can't help but be filled with hope for our future. This hope is rooted in the work you'll find in these pages, including a historic moment for infrastructure funding, a new partnership that will transform how we approach conservation, the teammates who inspire me every day, and the projects described here.

Peg R. Olsen
Director



Moose River © Carl Heilman

Moose River

Building on our purchase of 753 acres of forest on the Adirondack Park's western edge, we're thrilled to announce that we recently added another 128 acres to this parcel. The property includes a two-mile stretch of the Main Branch of the Moose River, the primary freshwater system of the southwest Adirondacks. Conserving this parcel maintains the river's natural shoreline and protects a major wildlife corridor between the Tug Hill Plateau and the Adirondacks, helping to keep pathways open for a wide range of animals, including moose and bobcat. There are benefits for people, too. Moose River is known for seasonal whitewater rafting adventures offered by professional guides, making it an important part of the region's recreation-based economy.

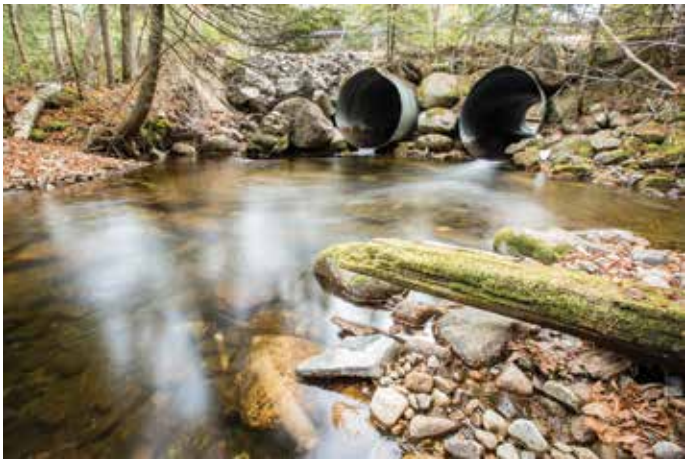
Catalyzing Land and Water Protection

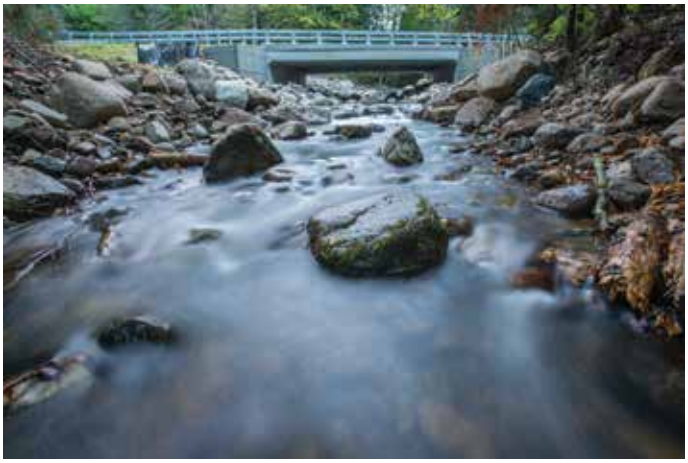
Last year we awarded $300,000 through our grant program for land trusts, including five grants in the linkages that help connect other core forested areas to the Adirondacks. This year, we'll award another $300,000 in grants, with an added emphasis on projects that highlight the many ways people benefit from the work. We'll look to support projects that promote sustainable economic development, engage new or nontraditional partners, or benefit vulnerable communities.

Protecting Lake Champlain

We have launched a campaign calling on state officials to take action in preventing the round goby from entering Lake Champlain. The goby eats the eggs and young of native fish, damages habitat, and causes communities to lose economic revenue. Last summer, it was found in the Hudson River. By keeping a single lock closed in the Champlain canal, we can stop it from reaching Lake Champlain and causing irreversible harm to the lake and all who rely on it. We are increasing public awareness and support via community and governmental outreach, media coverage, and advertising.

Cover: See dozens of bird species from a peatland boardwalk at our Spring Pond Bog Preserve. © John DiGiacomo





Before and after a right-sized culvert installation. © Erika Bailey/TNC

Historic Opportunity to Make Crossings Safer

Our work to improve road–stream crossings across the Adirondacks goes back more than a decade. Undersized and poorly designed culverts, like in the "before" picture above, can pose a serious barrier to fish and other wildlife attempting to migrate up- or downstream. The Nature Conservancy began working on streams throughout the region to allow water and species to move as freely as possible. After Tropical Storm Irene hit the area in 2011, it caused extensive flooding in our communities, much of which was a result of poorly designed road–stream crossings. This event galvanized our work because the obsolete infrastructure can cause dangerous conditions, including road collapse, flooding of homes and businesses, and degraded water quality.

To respond to the challenge, the Adirondack team catalyzed a statewide collaborative to share data and best practices, helped survey almost 3,000 road–stream crossings in the region, and raised $2 million in direct project funding to build resilient infrastructure. But we must increase the pace and scale of our work even more to meet the climate-related challenges we face.

The tens of billions of dollars coming to New York thanks to the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, signed into law last November, mark a unique opportunity in New York history and will help our work rise to meet the moment.

"The funding coming down the pike is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform our communities and ecosystems by building resilient infrastructure across the state," says Josh LaFountain, freshwater project coordinator. "We're reworking our approach to best take advantage of this historic opportunity."

This shift will include TNC taking on more of an advisory role with communities to prioritize infrastructure replacements based on greatest need, identify funding mechanisms, and ensure that projects are designed for our new climate reality. When communities face barriers, we provide the science, tools, and partnerships to help break through.

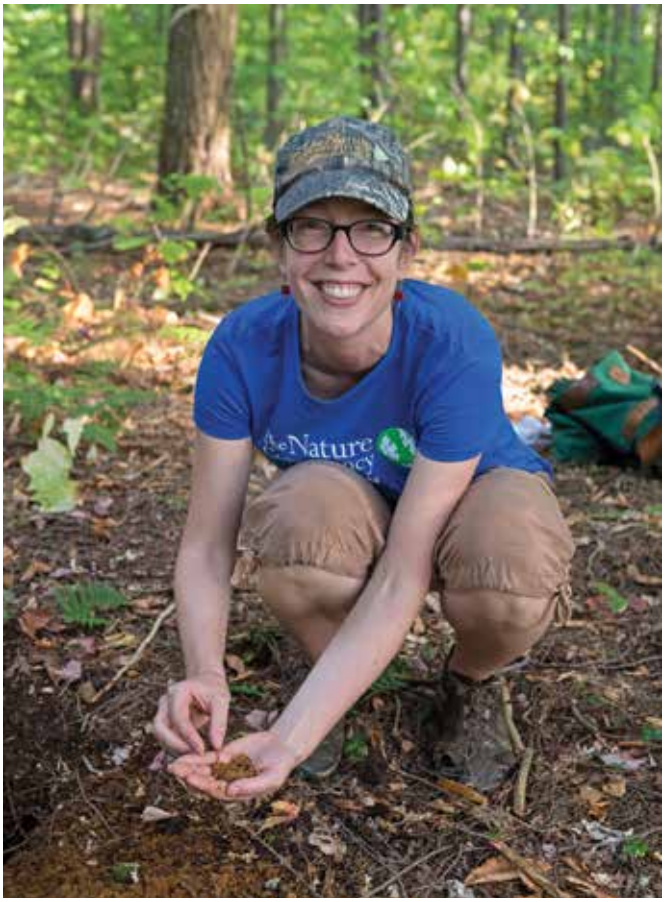
SECURING COLD-WATER HABITAT

With rising temperatures, there's a reduction in available cold-water habitat for fish. Species like brook trout and Atlantic salmon are particularly vulnerable. In many rivers, dams and culverts block the path to smaller, cooler upland tributaries. We're partnering with the Adirondack Land Trust, Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and others to pilot a rapid watershed restoration project on Cold Brook, a tributary to the North Branch of the Boquet River. Our goal is to open the entire system for trout and salmon spawning habitat, while also increasing the area's resilience. We'll remove a dam to immediately reconnect four miles of valuable upstream habitat, and we'll replace culverts to reconnect the remaining roughly 14 miles of Cold Brook and its tributaries.

Behind Every Organization are the People Who Make Everything Happen

No matter the odds, **we find the people and paths** to make change possible in the Adirondacks and beyond. Given the global reach of The Nature Conservancy, there are colleagues across our organization whose work directly benefits the Adirondacks in countless measures. We'd like to (re)introduce you to some of them.

We tackle climate change using science and nature-based solutions.


Michelle Brown, senior conservation scientist. © John DiGiacomo

Senior Conservation Scientist Michelle Brown oversees research and planning to keep our conservation actions grounded in science and leads statewide initiatives focused on the role lands and waters play in mitigating climate change. Our science shows that natural climate solutions—based on the conservation, restoration and management of forests, grasslands and wetlands—can deliver up to a third of the emission reductions we need to achieve by 2030.

We protect and connect climate resilient lands and waters.

New York Lands Director Dirk Bryant is the conservation lead on our Appalachians work, a program to connect the landscape from Alabama to Canada, with the Adirondacks as a key piece of the puzzle. He has helped orchestrate some of the biggest land protection deals in the Adirondacks and launched the Staying Connected Initiative, now a 68+ partner coalition of environmental organizations and public agencies working to secure key linkages or wildlife corridors. **Alissa Fadden** leads **terrestrial wildlife connectivity efforts**, conducting field research and working with landowners and highway departments to make habitats and roads safe for wildlife. **Josh Gorman**, our new **land protection manager**, works on land acquisitions and conservation easements that conserve biodiversity, store carbon, protect water sources, and help wildlife and communities adapt to climate change.

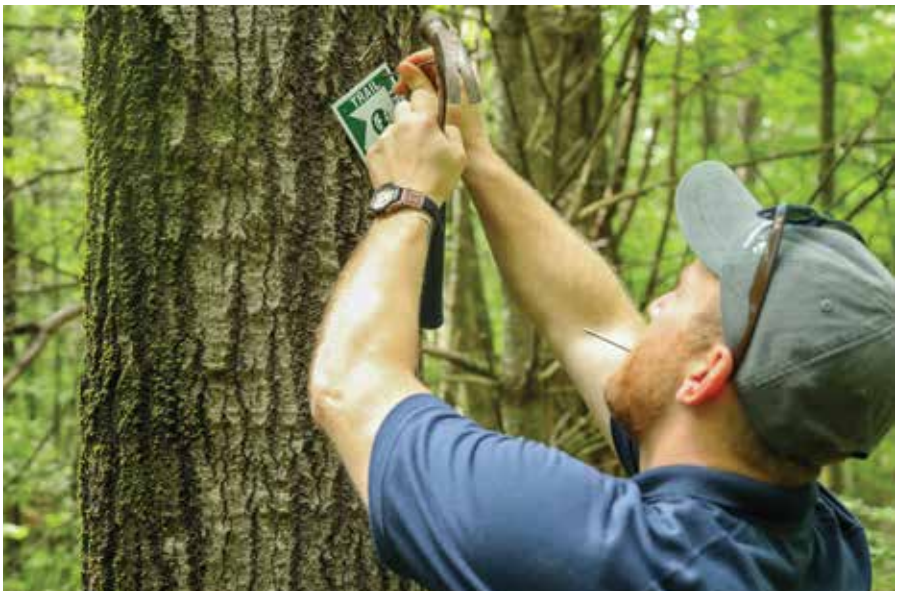
Freshwater Project Coordinator Josh LaFountain leads the resilient infrastructure program, which helps communities adapt to climate change. His primary focus is to make "right-designed" road–stream crossings business as usual, which keeps our communities safe from flooding and reconnects aquatic habitat for fish and other wildlife.

The **Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program team—Tammara Van Ryn, Zack Simek, Brian Greene**, and **Becca Bernacki**—has worked on the ground for more than two decades to minimize the negative impacts of invasive species on the economy and ecology of the Adirondack region through prevention, early detection, eradication, and management. This work protects our lands and waters and enables native species to thrive.

We collaborate with local communities, Indigenous Peoples, governments, landowners, and other partners.

In addition to serving as **Adirondack Director, Peg Olsen** leads the state's work with Indigenous Peoples. She developed a four-year partnership with the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment to serve as a bridge between traditional ecological knowledge and Western scientific approaches, embracing a "two-eyed" way of seeing and informing conservation.

Andrea Armstrong, our conservation social scientist, collaborates with natural scientists and resource managers to investigate human–nature relationships and to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation.



Bill Martin, conservation easement program coordinator. © TNC

The members of our **Stewardship team—Jan Localio, Bill Martin, Kate Berdan, Jeff Webber**, and **Tom Lake**—oversee conservation easements covering nearly 80,000 acres in the Adirondacks. They also maintain our six North Country preserves that connect people with nature and its many benefits. They are hard at work to expand access to populations who have historically been excluded from nature.

We maximize our impact by developing innovative tools and strategies, drawing on local knowledge, educating decision-makers, and creating new paths to funding.

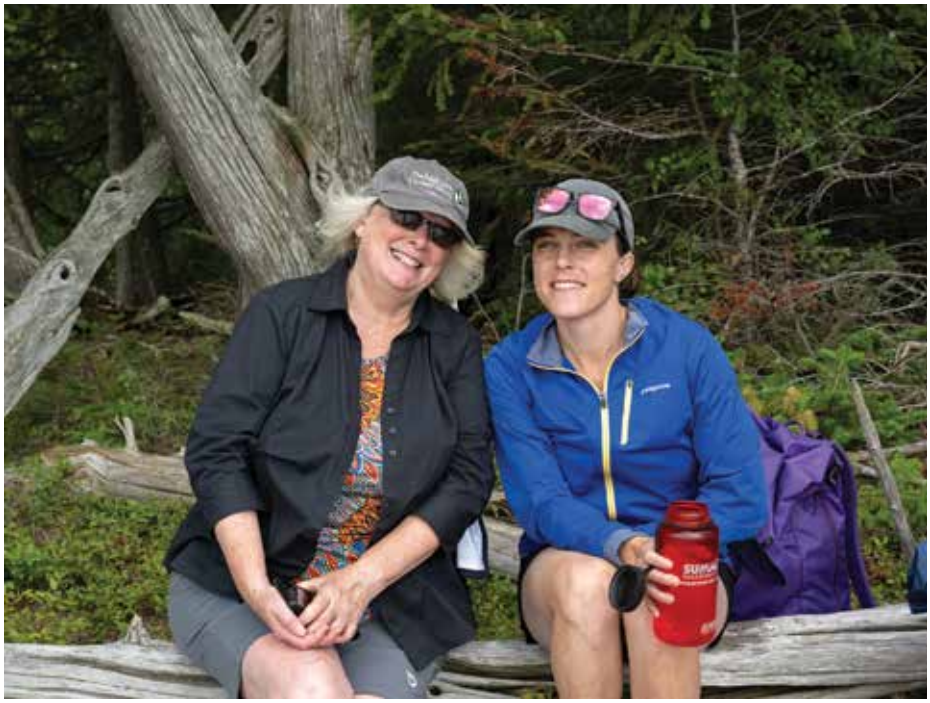
Jess Ottney Mahar leads **New York's policy team** and brings the expertise of The Nature Conservancy's scientists to bear on the most pressing conservation issues of our time, leading successful campaigns that have brought $1.5 billion in funding to the state's Environmental Protection Fund.

Abby Blum, Sophie McClelland, and **Dawn Ormsby** work with individuals, our Board of Trustees, corporations, and foundations to help secure the funds that are critical to our work in the Adirondacks and beyond.

Amanda Ely is a trained storyteller who works to raise awareness and convey the importance of our work to a variety of audiences, including the media, our partners and donors, elected officials, and the community at large.

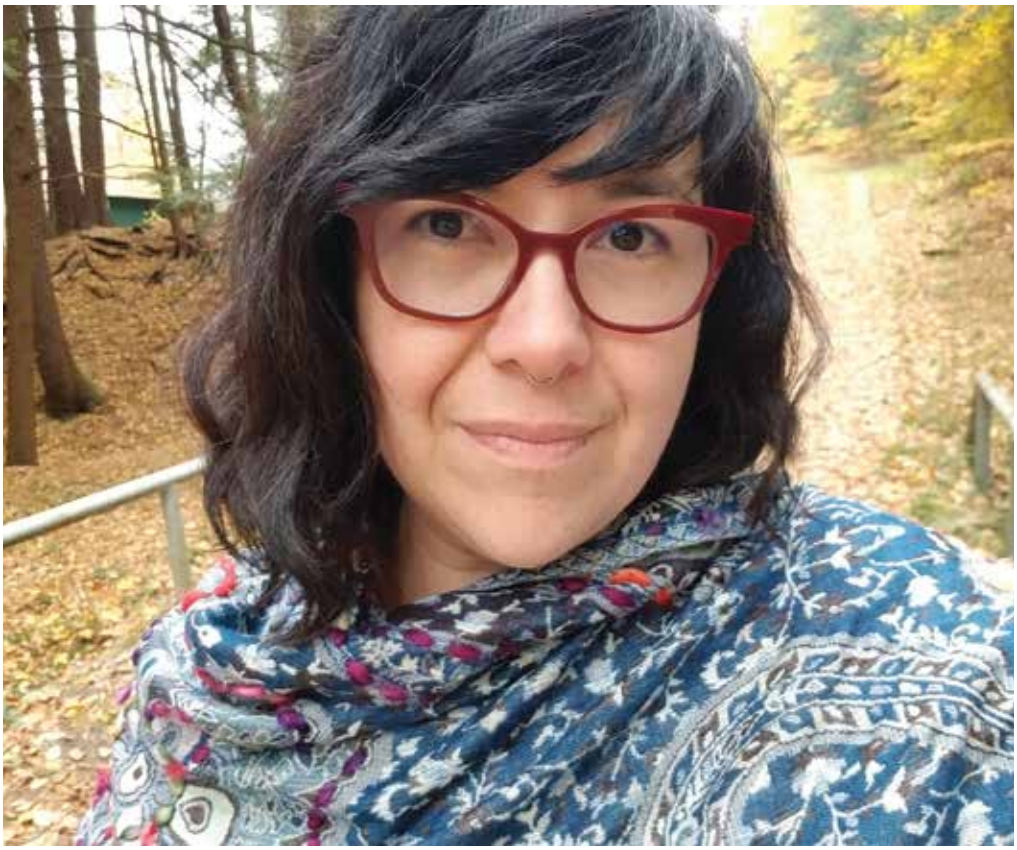
None of this would be possible without our **Finance and Operations team, Beth Pelkey and Liz Marr**.

Together, we find a way.



Beth Pelkey, Office Manager and Sophie McClelland, Associate Director of Development. © John DiGiacomo

Re-Story-ation



Stephanie Morningstar

In partnership with SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, we recently spoke to Stephanie Morningstar, the PhD candidate who leads the Re-Story-ation project to create a new narrative that restores Indigenous Peoples' engagement to their ancestral homelands and gives voices to their perspectives. She is Mohawk, Turtle clan with roots in Six Nations of the Grand River and Tyendinaga territories.

Was there an experience that sparked your activism around land justice?

I was baptized by the land. I am not Christian, but at a very early age I started going camping at Allegheny State Park in Seneca territory. It's my spirit home and where I go to connect with my late mother. She passed away as a direct result of legacy residential school survivor syndrome that impacted her health and wellbeing. My origin story in land justice started in health justice. Based on her death, I started looking at Indigenous relationships with systems and structures and how they are very unequal. Part of that was connecting land and environment and health.

You've spoken of story foraging. What does that mean?

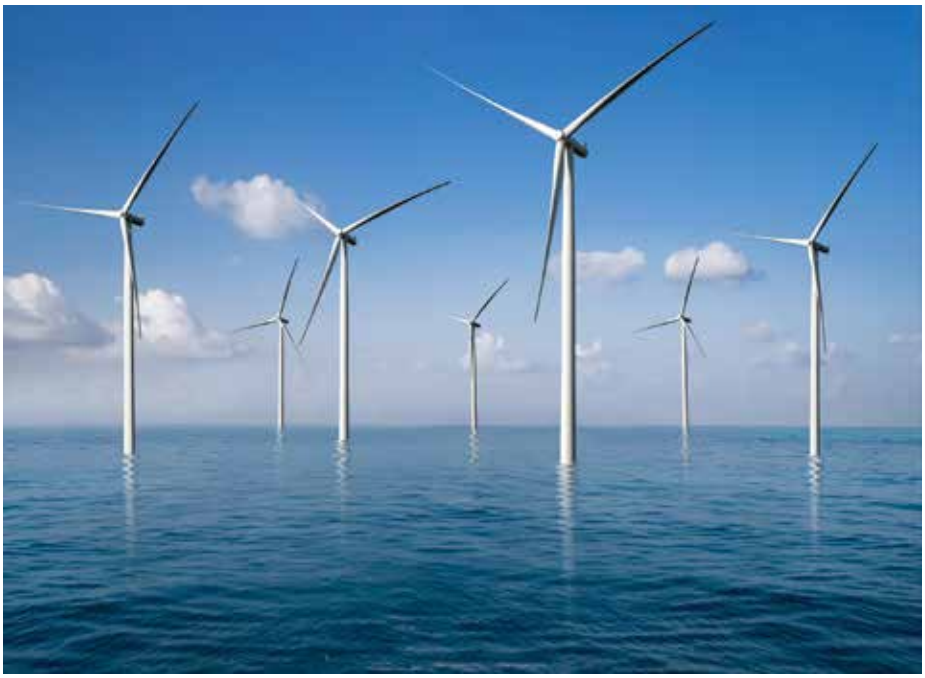
Foraging is the act of intentionally looking for something for the benefit of Creation. With stories, these are the seeds that we carry and that our ancestors carried that we pass on to one another that are derived from the land and from our own innate neurotechnology. You need guidelines and protocols to ensure you're accessing knowledge in a respectful way, in a way that creates reciprocity. I'm interested in how we can look for stories that we can make things from, that are medicines for us, and that are nourishing to us.

What are your hopes for the Re-Story-ation collaboration?

Rematriation of knowledge—the Indigenous concept that refers to reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources—is one of the most essential things we can cultivate from this work. We all have varying degrees of connection with our cultures and stories are a good place to start when you are learning about who you are as a Haudenosaunee citizen or Indigenous Person. What I am hoping for and what I am already seeing is that we are creating pathways to return to Ka'nikonhrí:io or the Good Mind. That's critical. We do everything from that place and we tell stories as a way of being able to pass on all those original instructions and who we are as a people in connection with the land and the waters.

I hope the outcomes will be led by Indigenous Peoples and that our sovereignty is centered. It's an amazing opportunity for the Conservancy to learn directly from Indigenous Peoples and from the people of the territories you occupy. It's one wonderful example of what's possible and I'm proud to be a part of it.

Climate Change and You



Wind turbines off the coast of New York. © Blue Planet Studio

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the scientific group assembled by the United Nations to monitor and assess all global science related to climate change, recently released its 2022 report. And the results are sobering. It underscores what we already know: Climate change is causing more frequent and more severe storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, and other extreme weather events. The increased frequency and severity of these events threaten the health and safety of millions of people around the world, both through direct impacts and by making it harder to produce food and access clean water.

But what's new and particularly troubling is that warming temperatures are leading to more "compound extremes." This is when multiple climate hazards (such as extreme temperature and precipitation) occur simultaneously in the same place, affect multiple regions at the same time, or occur in a sequence. For example, sustained higher temperatures can decrease soil moisture, which suppresses plant growth, which in turn reduces local rainfall, which leads to more drought in an escalating feedback loop.

But there is hope.

Climate change is here today, reshaping our world in ways big and small. But that doesn't mean our future is predetermined. Every fraction of a degree of warming makes a difference when it comes to mitigating the impacts of climate change. We still can limit further warming and help communities around the world adapt to the changes that have already occurred.

And in New York, we are doing just that. Our state has the nation's most robust climate policy. We are helping New York lead the way with scalable solutions to fight climate change and ensure a thriving and resilient future for all.

We are providing key research, information, and collaboration to help New York State achieve its ambitious emissions reduction and renewable energy targets—New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act—the most forward-looking legislation in the United States. We've had a successful year helping to implement this legislation, which commits to a nation-leading target of 100 percent clean energy by 2040 and net zero emissions by 2050.

And we recently published our Long Island Solar Roadmap, a first-of-its-kind tool outlining how Long Island could produce more electricity than it uses (19.5 gigawatts to power 4.8 million homes), while protecting natural areas, reducing energy costs, and creating jobs.

We also launched the 'Yes in My Back Yard' or 'YIMBY' Toolkit, a public opinion project to understand the perceptions, preferences, and concerns about non-residential renewable energy projects in communities.

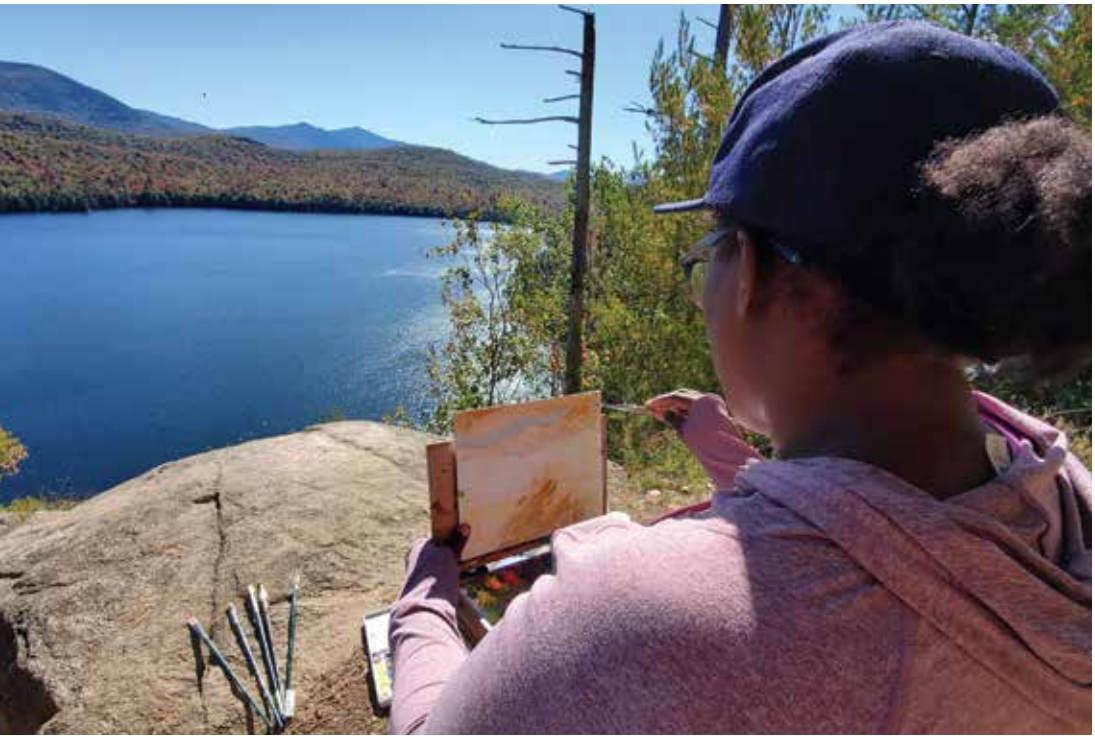
What can we do to stop climate change?

When every fraction of a degree counts, we must use every tool available to us. That means accelerating the global transition to clean energy and doing more to leverage nature's ability to fight climate change. It also means finding more climate-friendly ways to produce food and creating climate-resilient water sources. To learn more, visit www.ipcc.ch/reports.

The Nature Conservancy
Adirondacks

The Nature Conservancy Adirondack Chapter
Barnett Center for Conservation
PO Box 65
Keene Valley, NY 12943
nature.org/newyork
518-576-2082

facebook/tncny
twitter@nature_ny



Adirondack Board member Takeyce Walter paints at Silver Lake Bog Preserve. © TNC

This Way to Nature

Silver Lake Bog Preserve in Au Sable Forks is one of our most popular preserves in the North Country. It offers spectacular views of Silver Lake and a boardwalk that winds through an ancient peatland bog, the unsung hero of carbon capture. Landscapes like this one also greatly enhance our regional biodiversity.

The Bluffs Trail will be getting a facelift this year with the help of trail crews from the Adirondack Mountain Club, who will create a safer and more sustainable trail. These trail improvements are the first step in a multi-year plan to improve accessibility at the preserve.

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