

ADIRONDACK CHAPTER UPDATE | SPRING/SUMMER | 2020

The Adirondacks depend on us.

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Dear Friends of the Adirondacks,



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With all that is happening here and around the world, I hope you and your friends and family are healthy and safe.

As I write this, I find myself—like many of you—working from home. But that is not to say that the entire Adirondack Team isn't still hard at work. We are doing all we can to safeguard healthy landscapes, clean waters and open spaces. Even as this pandemic upends our lives, the challenges facing nature will not stop. It is why we remain steadfast in our efforts to tackle climate change and leverage the power of nature to make us stronger.

You're our partner in this work, which has been decades in the making. April 22 marked the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day, an historic event that launched the modern environmental movement. On that day, millions of Americans rallied in response to a nation in crisis—scenes of oil spills, choking smog, and rivers so polluted they literally caught fire had become alarmingly common.

Despite the many environmental successes achieved since then, we face a new and sobering reality today: Climate change is the biggest conservation challenge of our time and it's altering our natural world more quickly than we ever anticipated.

And as plants and animals seek refuge in a climate-changing world, our scientists tell us that the Adirondacks, and the work done by the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, are becoming more important.

The Nature Conservancy works with partners and communities across the Adirondacks and around the world, from the High Peaks to the Outback of Australia. Over the past 65 years, we've worked to build a global conservation community—to create a world where people and nature thrive now and for generations to come.

We know how much can be accomplished by working together toward change. That's exactly the kind of commitment the Adirondacks need now.

During this difficult time, I'm especially grateful for your support to conserve the lands and waters that sustain us, now and for the future.

I hope that you'll be heartened to read these stories and know that our work continues through all the challenges we face.

Peg Olsen
Director

Connecting Landscapes and Building Corridors as Climate Changes

When Alissa Fadden looks at the Adirondacks and the forests beyond to the Canadian Maritimes, she sees millions of acres that can provide critical habitat to countless animals, such as bobcat and bear, whose populations are expanding across New York due to climate change, development and other pressures.

Except I-90, the nation's longest interstate highway, is in the way.

As wildlife migrate from the Central Appalachians to the Adirondacks—one of the largest temperate deciduous forests in the world—that 3,020-mile-long road is, perhaps, the most visible obstacle they'll face. But it's hardly the only one. Development and fragmentation of the landscape are among the other challenges that compound the stresses of climate change.

"Climate impacts are just beginning, yet species are already shifting 11 miles north and 30 feet higher in elevation per decade," Fadden says. "In 80 years, the climate in the Adirondacks is likely to resemble what we see in West Virginia today. We need to ensure wildlife can safely migrate northward, and have high quality habitat to live in, as the world changes."

With our partners at the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, we are working on ways to overcome these challenges. The group recently received a planning grant so that The Nature Conservancy can study spots along I-90 where wildlife crossings can be improved and identify critical pieces of land in the area that should be protected.

"Together, by focusing on safeguarding this network of lands, we are protecting the most resilient and connected places for wildlife to persist in the face of climate change," says Mark King, executive director of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy.

All these efforts are part of the Conservancy's "Blue Ridge to Boreal" vision to safeguard the most resilient and connected lands in a 179-million-acre region. The resilient and connected network accounts for a quarter of the land in the east, stores more than half of the carbon, and contains three-quarters of the water supply.

"We are building on our previous success in places like the Adirondacks' Black River Valley to think even bigger—on a continental scale. No one organization or strategy alone can tackle a challenge of this size. We're all in this together," adds Fadden.



Alissa Fadden will bring experience from working with partners and landowners in the Black River Valley, an important wildlife corridor that links the Adirondacks to the Tug Hill Plateau, to address challenges in the Mohawk Valley.



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Bring the Right People Together: New APIPP Manager Gets to Work

Tammara Van Ryn, the new manager of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP), is a forester, farmer and conservationist; she knows how destructive invasive species can be. She spoke with us about her goals for this Conservancy-led group, a coalition of 30 organizations backed by New York State’s Department of Environmental Conservation.

What Attracted You to Conservation?

My mother was a post-World War II European immigrant to the U.S., and she was a recycler before it was ever popular. She was always very conscious about consumption and our impact on the environment; she was a great role model. I recall tagging along to Earth Day celebrations when I was in middle school. My life has been mostly about plants and I always wanted to live in the mountains and work in the woods, whether forestry or farming.

What Are Some Highlights of Your Past Experience?

Conserving land is incredibly important to ensure future generations can benefit from our natural heritage. My career path led to forestry, land conservation and operating an organic farm. The capstone of my career was founding and serving as executive director of the Land Trust Accreditation

Commission, a group that ensures over 400 conservation groups nationwide—including The Nature Conservancy—adhere to national quality standards for governance, finance and land stewardship.

The theory I embody in my work is you’ve got to bring the right people together and have a good way for them to engage, be involved and contribute. If you take this approach, in the end, you will get great results.

What are Your Plans for APIPP?

One of the biggest threats we face is climate change. But the Adirondacks is also more resilient to the impacts of climate change than many other landscapes. Such places are of critical importance as rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and other climate impacts destabilize our natural world.

I’ll be engaging our partners in a strategic plan revision to ensure we are focusing our work where we can have the biggest impact on reducing the economic and ecologic impact of invasive species on the Adirondacks. I’m also excited about adding a new education coordinator to our team to build and support our volunteer network, and to getting our team out in the field for the summer season and my boots on the ground.



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Improving and protecting water quality means safe, accessible, and clean water for both people and nature. The Nature Conservancy is working to reduce the amount of pollutants that enter New York's waters to prevent harmful algal blooms, protect drinking water sources and ensure healthy habitats for wildlife.

Protecting New York's Water

From the Great South Bay to the Finger Lakes, New York's waters are our most precious resource. But with unsustainable food production and insufficient wastewater treatment, 80 percent of our fresh and coastal waters are contaminated, and one-fifth of our river basins cannot support the combined needs of people and nature.

"What was for a long time considered an abundant and inexpensive resource becomes a priceless commodity when water is polluted and scarce," explains George Schuler, co-director of The Nature Conservancy's New York Water Priority. "Growing and changing demands for water are putting stress on a system that is already challenged by climate change and degradation of natural areas that protect water supplies. Today, nine out of 10 natural disasters linked to climate change are water related—whether too much water, too little water or water that is too polluted."

Throughout the state of New York, The Nature Conservancy is engaging communities and working toward solutions.

"We are coordinating closely with government, residents and businesses to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous pollution, as well as how waste and stormwater are being managed. We are ensuring that these systems work together to protect and provide adequate water for generations to come," says Stuart Lowrie, co-director of The Nature Conservancy's New York Water Priority.

Improving and protecting water quality is a key component of our work to provide safe, accessible, and clean water for both people and nature. Reducing the amount of pollutants that enter New York's waters is critical to prevent harmful algal blooms, protect drinking water sources and ensure healthy habitats for marine and freshwater species. Developing and implementing strategies to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous pollution is key and includes a diverse array of projects, including installing upgraded septic systems on Long Island, protecting source water in the Adirondacks and working with farmers in the Finger Lakes to implement better agricultural practices.

ONE WATER, NEW YORK

The Nature Conservancy is working to build the capacity of water professionals to improve and integrate management structures for better water quality and resources throughout the state of New York. Called our *One Water* initiative, we are working with local water managers to take into account all water—drinking water, wastewater, stormwater—as resources that must be managed holistically and sustainably.

By the Numbers

The Nature Conservancy was born with the purchase of Mianus River Gorge Preserve in 1955 in New York. From the Great Lakes to Long Island, we advance science, conservation know-how, and diverse partnerships to build a resilient future. We are united in the need to protect land, water, and all the life it sustains, including ourselves.

2019 was a remarkable year for The Nature Conservancy in New York. We are grateful for your support in helping us tackle the greatest environmental threats of our time. Here are some numbers to share:

70

members representing 50 organizations launched the NYC Urban Forest Task Force to protect, maintain, use, and expand the city's urban forest.

20

farmers engaged in exploring innovative practices to benefit soil health and water quality on agricultural lands in the Finger Lakes.

40,000

acres of rooftops in New York City targeted for solar panel sites as part of two newly enacted laws to make the city more sustainable.

87

acres of critical land in the Finger Lakes donated to The Nature Conservancy for future restoration.

40

year-old Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island celebrated this milestone anniversary.

\$126 million

per year needed to improve water quality conditions on Long Island through septic system upgrades.

23,000

cubic yards of sand has been used to rebuild an eroded beach and protect communities in Sandy Creek, Lake Ontario.

21,000

megawatts of solar capacity could be installed on Long Island's rooftops, parking lots, and developed land.

55,750

acres of Adirondack forest could be enrolled in our *Working Woodlands* program, an effort to save trees, combat climate change and generate revenue for landowners.

\$3 billion

environmental bond act proposed by Governor Cuomo to support water quality, land protection and climate resilience.

75 %

of New York's road-stream crossings are undersized, creating barriers for fish and reducing flood resiliency.

773

infestations of invasive species are being managed by staff and partners in the Adirondacks.



Bluebird, New York State's bird. © Derek Rogers



© Tristan Stringer

A grey kangaroo lit up by the morning light.

Global Focus: Update on Australia's Bushfire Crisis

2019 was Australia's hottest and driest year on record which was a major contributor to the worst wildfires ever recorded along the forested east coast over the 2019/20 southern summer.

With 18.5 million acres of forests burned in south-east mainland Australia alone, the effects of the fires have been horrendous from loss of human life to the loss of native Australian plants and animals to the devastation on communities and habitat.

More than one billion land mammals, birds, and reptiles are estimated to have been killed, along with countless bats, fish, frogs, and insects. Many endangered species have lost the majority of their habitat—up to 95 percent—jeopardizing their futures.

“To respond to this unprecedented crisis, we’re bringing together experts from agriculture, conservation, indigenous land management, forestry, business, science and philanthropy, to agree on a plan to protect the future of Australian nature,” said Rich Gilmore, director of The Nature Conservancy Australia. “Together, we’re developing a market-based approach to deliver funding from private investors and government to restore private and public lands.”



Protecting Water for Australia's Future

Recently, generous New Yorkers supported the first water markets fund in Australia. Through NatureVest, this project realizes a financial return for investors, while providing water to important wetlands supporting water dependent wildlife within the southern Murray-Darling Basin. As a result some wetlands have seen water for the first time in years, with emus, swans, and kangaroos returning to areas that hadn't seen such wildlife in a decade.

Curbing the Loss of Nature and Wildlife through Climate Policy

To tackle climate change locally and around the world, and to protect nature from collapse, The Nature Conservancy is redoubling our efforts, including advocating for stronger policies to accelerate the pace and scale of climate action.

The decisions we make today will determine whether we achieve the world's sustainability goals for 2030—a longstanding milestone that is just 10 years away. We'll work to chart a brighter future for people and nature by urging global policymakers, the private sector and interested individuals to drive change during this crucial year for environmental policy.

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Essex Chain Lakes. © Takeyce Walter

CONNECTING WITH NATURE THROUGH ART

From our vast hardwood forests to our 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, the Adirondacks offer something for everyone. Takeyce Walter, an accomplished artist and trustee of the Adirondack Chapter, chose a creative way to connect with nature and celebrate the important role The Nature Conservancy has played in protecting this remarkable landscape.