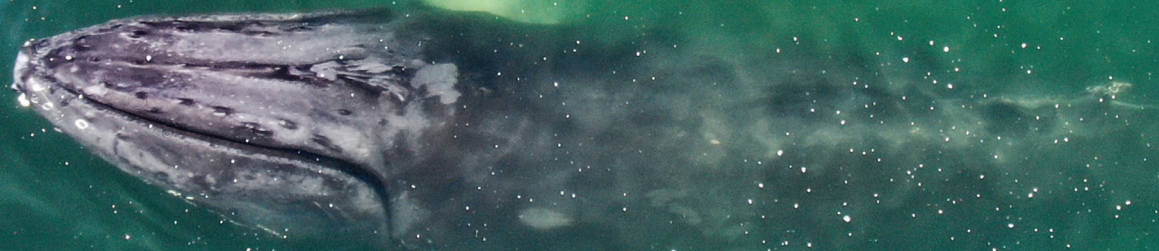


LONG ISLAND UPDATE | FALL/WINTER | 2019

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# Long Island depends on us.



The Nature  
Conservancy 

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prevented

# Celebrating Conservation Victories



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Dear Supporter,

These days, it's hard to go far without hearing about, seeing or feeling the effects of climate change. Whether it's reading a national headline, listening to local news, driving through your neighborhood or spending time outdoors, the consequences of a changing climate are all around us. And the most recent reports of forecasted impacts are clear: We are running out of time.

Our current conservation challenges—pollution of our bays and harbors, acidification of our oceans, pests and pathogens in our forests, flooding and drought in our agricultural regions—are all exacerbated by climate change.

But there is good news: As an organization that works globally, regionally and locally, The Nature Conservancy is making a real difference when it comes to tackling these challenges.

We work with policymakers, community leaders and conservation partners to help people adapt to a changing world, in many cases using the solutions found in nature, such as the restoration of healthy wetlands and streambanks.

Recently, we worked with New York State to advocate for the passage of the most ambitious climate legislation in the nation, that will make us the first net-zero emissions state.

And at our Uplands Farm Sanctuary, we made needed upgrades to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings, including installation of solar panels and an electric vehicle charging station. These upgrades will reduce the carbon footprint of the Uplands campus by more than 54 tons a year.

I encourage you to read about our work in this issue and at [nature.org/newyork](http://nature.org/newyork). And as always, I thank you for your steadfast support in protecting nature and preserving life.

The world we depend on depends on us. And we depend on you.

Nancy Kelley  
Chapter Director

COVERA humpback whale, photographed off the beach in East Hampton pursues a school of menhaden. A critically important bait fish for whales, dolphins, striped bass and seabirds, menhaden are now being protected from large fishing nets thanks to a New York law that The Nature Conservancy helped to pass. More work needs to be done to protect forage fish and marine life along the coast. © Sutton Lynch

# Setting the Stage for Success

## 20 YEARS OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND

Tapping his foot to the music, Kevin McDonald sits in the open-air pavilion at Good Ground Park. He's one of thousands of community residents to enjoy the free concert series in Hampton Bays. This joyful evening of good friends and good vibes—and the other recreational opportunities this public park provides—was years in the making. Good Ground Park symbolizes a dream realized by residents and visionaries. But the groundwork for its success was laid two decades ago as the 36-acre property was purchased using Community Preservation Fund (CPF) monies.

The CPF is funded by a two-percent tax paid by real estate purchasers in the five East End towns. Over its 20-year history, the program has generated \$1.2 billion and conserved 10,000 acres of wildlife habitat, environmentally valuable areas, working farms, and public parks, as well as helped preserve the integrity of local communities.

In the years leading up to its inception, rampant development pressures were plaguing the East End of Long Island. Elected officials and community members banded together in search of a solution.

“The passage of the CPF was the most ambitious public policy initiative to advance in Suffolk County in the last 30 years,” said McDonald, conservation finance and policy director for the Conservancy’s Long Island Chapter.

In addition to generating over a billion dollars and preserving more than 10,000 acres, the CPF now also funds water quality improvement projects thanks, in part, to a Conservancy-led campaign for its expansion. In 2016, voters overwhelmingly approved the new measure that broadened and extended the CPF to 2050.

“While the CPF has seen great success, we can’t stop here. Additional investments are critical—and we must move quickly,” says McDonald. “Our bays and harbors are suffering from nitrogen pollution, which also threatens our drinking water supply. We have to muster the same determination today that we did 20 years ago and rally to fix our water quality problems.”

The story of the CPF demonstrates what is possible when diverse members of a community come together to protect the land and waters they love.



© A. Graziano Photography

With the passage of the local law extending the Community Preservation Fund (CPF) and expanding its use to include water quality improvement projects, several east end towns now have access to funding to incentivize the voluntary upgrade of standard septic systems to low-nitrogen systems. For more information visit [www.reclaimourwater.info](http://www.reclaimourwater.info)



Rich Olsen-Harbich of Bedell Vineyards, Long Island. © Kara Jackson/The Nature Conservancy

# Raising a Glass to Nature

For New York’s farmers, climate change isn’t looming in the distant future—it’s happening now. And when it comes to growing grapes, more frequent storms cause the fruit to mildew and rot. Heavy rainfalls erode soil and damage vines. And rising temperatures coincide with increased humidity, which leads to more pests.

Even the slightest of changes can affect the timing of harvest, the quantity of grapes produced, and the quality and complexity of the wine.

## Finger Lakes

“The wine industry should be highly concerned about and taking the lead in mitigating and adapting to climate change,” explained Suzanne Hunt, who is a partner in her family’s seventh generation farm and winery, Hunt Country Vineyards.

Recently, Hunt has seen direct impacts of climate change—flash floods, followed by drought and damage to the vines from wildly variable temperatures in winter.

## Long Island

Richard Olsen-Harbich of Bedell Cellars, a pioneer in Long Island winemaking, notes, “Most vines are ripening their crops earlier than they used to and that’s something that grape growers across the world are seeing as well.”

Benjamin Cook, a climate scientist at the NASA Goddard Institute, concurs that earlier harvests are happening—but that doesn’t necessarily make grape growing easier. With higher moisture levels, damper vines may need fungicide or pesticide treatment.

## Hudson Valley

In the Hudson Valley, home of some of the country’s oldest vineyards, new weather patterns bring challenges. The river moderates the climate, but the area’s high humidity, precipitation and cooler temperatures dictate which vines will thrive.

Matthew Spaccarelli, a winemaker at Benmarl Winery acknowledges the recent hurdles created by climate change. He plans to adapt his practices to deal with the changing climate, improve sustainability of his vineyard, and keep the wine flowing.

Whether in the Hudson Valley, Finger Lakes, or Long Island, the increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather is attributable to climate change, and that’s hard on winegrowers and all farmers.

“We can do everything perfectly in our vineyards and perfectly in the wine cellar but it will all be for nothing if we don’t solve the climate crisis,”

– Suzanne Hunt,  
Hunt Country Vineyards.

We depend on nature, not only to grow grapes for wine, but also for the food we eat every day. The Nature Conservancy works to share new practices with farmers and equip them with resources and tools they need to adapt to and mitigate climate change, while safeguarding their livelihoods and protecting lands and waters. Visit [nature.org/climate](https://www.nature.org/climate) for more information.

# Making History Through Conservation and Policy

## NEW CONSERVATION FINANCE TOOLS PROTECT MORE LAND THAN EVER

At 253,000 acres, the Cumberland Forest Project, one of the Conservancy's largest-ever conservation efforts in the eastern United States, protects sweeping forest landscapes in the Central Appalachians, across parts of Southwest Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Safeguarding this vast stretch of forest tackles climate change on two fronts: by storing millions of tons of carbon dioxide and by connecting a migratory corridor that scientists believe to be one of North America's most important "escape routes" as animal species, from warblers to bobcats, shift their ranges to cooler climates.

And there's another boon.

Much of the Cumberland Forest Project was structured as an investment fund by the Conservancy's NatureVest division—a team that leverages private investment capital to conserve at a greater scale and a faster pace. By carefully managing these forests under Forest Stewardship Council certification and selling the carbon offsets produced, the forests' health will improve while generating revenue for our conservation-minded investors, local foresters and mills.

This model also has implications for conservation in the years to come. Our science has shown that people and nature can thrive into the future but only if we act now. By managing forests in a way that is both ecologically beneficial and economically sound, the Cumberland project demonstrates an important tool in achieving that future.

### NEW YORK PASSES LANDMARK CLIMATE LEGISLATION

New York State recently passed the most powerful climate legislation in the United States. Our policy team spent long days at the Capitol, working closely with conservation partners and elected officials to craft the new law: the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. It will drastically cut carbon pollution, safeguard New York's clean energy programs, and invest in under-resourced communities. This new bill mandates that New York reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, 70 percent renewable energy by 2030, and an equitable transition to a low-carbon future—showing the nation how to effectively fight climate change.

# Dedicated Supporters Caring for Conservation

We caught up recently with Long Island Chapter trustee Ken Wong and his wife Marie, who have been supporters of The Nature Conservancy since 2004. They split their time between New York City and the East End, where they enjoy connecting to nature.

## How do you feel about the Conservancy's work and mission?

The Nature Conservancy's mission is profoundly critical to the future of the world. It has never been more important for us to apply our intelligence to maintain—and in some cases restore—the balance between human impacts and the natural world on which we depend. We depend on nature for every breath of air and every sip of water for our very existence. What could be more fundamental?

## What attracts you to conservation?

There's nothing more inspiring than nature itself, so we have to start there. We've each been outdoor lovers since we were little kids, and today as active adults we try to be outside as much as possible—hiking, biking, swimming, paddleboarding—almost anything in nature.

The Nature Conservancy has shown us that any environmental problem created by humans can be solved through science, innovation and changes in behaviors which, in the right combination, can help nature to heal, businesses to thrive and people to enjoy the lifestyles they love.

## In terms of environmental solutions, what needs to happen in the next few years?

We must work harder, care more and give more. Awareness and education about environmental problems and their causes come first. We need to help more people understand the impacts of our actions and to provide real-world solutions that work for citizens, for businesses and for nature. We also need to listen better to the “other side” as we search for common solutions. This is where The Nature Conservancy's science-based, non-partisan approaches are more relevant than ever. We need positive, optimistic, problem-solving and there's no organization better at this than The Nature Conservancy. That's why we are contributing in every way possible to this organization, including sharing its story with as many people as we can.



“The Nature Conservancy's mission is profoundly important to the future of the world.”

– Ken Wong

Ken and Marie Wong and members of their family attended the Conservancy's Summer Benefit hosted on the grounds of the Center for Conservation.

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# By the Numbers

The Nature Conservancy was born with the purchase of Mianus River Gorge Preserve in 1955 right here in New York. Since then, we have conserved more than 815,000 acres across the state. We continue to be a conservation leader and are proud to have been the first state program to establish programs to make our water cleaner, our oceans healthier and our cities thriving.



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**0**  
carbon emissions in New York by 2050 thanks the passage of the most ambitious climate legislation in the United States.

**1st**  
of-its-kind boat wash station along a major highway opened at the I-87 Adirondacks Welcome Center to help protect waters from impacts of invasive plants.

**1,000**  
trees planted for habitat restoration and water quality protection at the newly expanded Eagle Crest Preserve in the Finger Lakes.

**400**  
volunteers planted 7,000 trees and cleaned up debris as part of a climate-resilience project at Brooklyn’s Marine Park.

**566**  
Suffolk County grants provided to homeowners for the installation of new nitrogen reducing septic systems.

**16**  
Hudson Valley communities engaged in climate-resilient future workshops.



**\$500 million**  
more statewide for drinking water protection and infrastructure upgrades.

**1,030**  
infestations of invasive plants completely removed in the Adirondacks.

**132**  
distinct whales observed feeding on menhaden around NYC by our partners at Gotham Whale.



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## FAMILY PICNIC DELIGHTS NATURE LOVERS OF ALL AGES

The Nature Conservancy welcomed friends and families to our 100-acre Uplands Farm Nature Sanctuary for an autumn picnic. Children, parents and grandparents unplugged and enjoyed a lively evening of art, music, wood-fired pizza and nature. Attendees delighted in hiking the woodland trails, meandering through meadows and chasing butterflies. Our guests learned how they can protect Long Island's waters for future generations.