

LONG ISLAND UPDATE | SPRING/SUMMER | 2019

Long Island depends on us.

IN THIS ISSUE

Protecting Lands and Waters

Connecting People with Nature

Seeing the Forest *and* the Trees

Saving Water Beyond Our Region

CONNECT WITH NATURE

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

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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.

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Celebrating Conservation Victories



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Dear Member,

The Nature Conservancy addresses the most pressing conservation challenges of our time: tackling climate change, protecting lands and waters, and providing food and water sustainably. With your support, we are working with local residents across Long Island to envision and build healthy communities for people and nature.

Earlier this year, we celebrated a huge conservation victory in Mastic and North Babylon with voters approving a \$362 million bond to improve water quality, the largest investment of its kind in Suffolk County since the 1970s. Residents there helped spread the message of the importance of investing in clean water. The plan, known as the *Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative*, will upgrade some 6,350 outdated cesspools and septic systems with sewer connections, cutting nitrogen pollution entering Great South Bay by more than 200,000 pounds per year. This landmark victory will help restore abundant fish and shellfish to our waters.

And The Nature Conservancy is doing its part by being good neighbors. Thanks to generous funders and partners, we've replaced decades-old cesspools at our office campus at Uplands Farm Sanctuary in Cold Spring Harbor. Once operational, an innovative wetland system will remove nearly all the nitrogen pollution in the wastewater, protecting local drinking water and coastal habitats. At the same time, we're working to become "carbon negative" and will be installing solar roofing panels, electric car charging stations and energy-efficient windows.

Our efforts don't stop there. We are creating a *Long Island Solar Roadmap* that identifies the best sites for solar energy projects such as roof tops and parking lots, working with local government, businesses and communities. These are some of the ways we work to bring effective conservation results to Long Island.

Speaking of results, this year marks the 20th anniversary of the Community Preservation Fund—the most successful municipal conservation program on Long Island—that we helped secure. To date, this initiative has raised over \$1 billion towards protecting our precious lands and waters. We hope you will join us to celebrate this milestone at our Summer Benefit on June 29th at the Center for Conservation.

Thank you for helping us work toward a future in which people and nature thrive.

Nancy N. Kelley
Executive Director

The Power of Nature

VETERANS SPEND TIME CONNECTING AT MASHOMACK PRESERVE

Warming themselves by the fire pit they had just built, a group of 20 veterans talked, laughed and reflected on their handiwork—and their time spent in the service. The individuals didn't know each other before they traveled from across the country to Mashomack Preserve. But they quickly became comrades as they took part in a health and wellness retreat hosted by Strongpoint Theinert Ranch and The Nature Conservancy. The weekend was meant to strengthen bonds while also providing respite in nature.

Strongpoint Theinert Ranch (STR), a nonprofit organization that hosts retreats for veterans, their families, and Gold Star Families, was founded to honor Army First Lieutenant Joseph J. Theinert of Shelter Island, who was killed in action while serving in Afghanistan.

“Joe and I spent a lot of time in Mashomack over the years—it was one of his favorite places,” said Jimbo Theinert, President of STR. “Getting veterans together to help deal with the trauma and challenges of returning from

deployment was born on Shelter Island when we welcomed Joe's platoon to visit here in 2011 after they redeployed from Afghanistan.

With Theinert's legacy underpinning the weekend, veterans traversed 10 miles of Mashomack in a combination paddle and hike. They cleared a trail extending to the bluffs overlooking Bass Creek and updated another trail for wheelchair access. But most importantly, they shared stories, connected and bonded in a natural, beautiful and supportive environment.



© Anthony Graziano

The Nature Conservancy engages with veterans and military communities, hosting retreats and workshops at its preserves across the country. We are dedicated to creating a workplace culture of inclusion that helps veterans transition to civilian life and leverage the full potential of their experiences.

“As a Marine Corps combat veteran, I experienced firsthand the restorative power of nature,” said Greg Jacob, policy advisor at the Conservancy and co-lead of Veterans in Nature's Service. “After leaving the Corps, my time in the woods, camping, hiking, and fishing played a pivotal role in my transition to civilian life. It's a privilege to bring veterans to our preserves. These retreats bring forth a powerful exchange, for staff to learn from veterans and for veterans to learn about our mission to protect and conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.”

Seeing the Forest and the Trees

Walking in a dense grove of maple trees, Senior Conservation Manager Troy Weldy stops, takes a deep breath and surveys his surroundings. The air feels fresh and cool as the newly-emerged leaves dapple delicate shadows on the woodland floor. Inspecting the forest canopy, Weldy smiles, knowing he's standing not just in a beautiful forest but also in a carbon-sequestering powerhouse.

Every year, an acre of mature northern forest can bottle up the carbon equivalent of driving 2,445 miles. Putting the power of trees to work, The Nature Conservancy has developed an innovative way to encourage landowners to protect the forests they may otherwise cut.

Through its *Working Woodlands* program, the Conservancy works with property owners to adopt and maintain long-term forest management plans, and then pays the property owners based upon how much carbon their forests can store. In turn, the Conservancy sells carbon credits to corporations that want to offset their environmental footprint. This program has a multitude of benefits: it sustains local economies, protects drinking water, provides connected wildlife habitat and safeguards scenic vistas.

"We're collaborating with nearly two dozen landowners in New York. This program is a great solution for those who want to pass down a healthy and productive forest for future generations," Weldy says.

In the Empire State, some 6,400 acres are currently enrolled in *Working Woodlands*; there are about 67,000 acres in the program nationally.

"Working Woodlands is a great solution for those who want to pass down a healthy and productive forest for future generations."

– Troy Weldy



© Ken Aaron

NATURAL SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In addition to helping capture more carbon pollution in forests, the Conservancy is tackling climate change by promoting clean, renewable energy. Our science and collaborations are accelerating wind, solar, and hydropower development that avoids adverse impacts to lands, waters, and local communities.

With New York's ocean waters slated to become the site for the nation's largest offshore wind farm, we're helping protect places important to whales, dolphins and sea life, as well as coastal communities and fishermen. Our smart-siting principles for responsible wind energy development—both on and offshore—are guiding New York's transition to a zero-carbon economy and setting the standard for other states.



Women gather water on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in the village of Mgambo, Tanzania. Lake Tanganyika holds nearly one-fifth of the world's freshwater, is the world's second largest lake by volume, and is home to 250 native species of fish. It provides 40 percent of all protein for lakeshore villages.

Saving Water Beyond Our Region

It's an iconic sight in rural Africa—to see a woman balancing a heavy water bucket on her head without spilling a drop. She may walk for miles with that load. But even when she arrives home, the weight remains on her shoulders.

In most African households, women are acutely affected by the quality and quantity of the water available to them. In rural areas, women spend hours each day walking to and from a reservoir.

In Kenya, the Tana River supplies 95 percent of the water for the city of Nairobi's four million residents, and for another five million people living in its surrounding communities. The river feeds the country's agricultural areas and provides half of its hydropower output. But development, poor farming practices and lack of planning threaten this resource. Land scarcity and declines in soil productivity drive farmers to expand cultivation into steeper slopes.

Deforestation of such hillsides causes massive sediment runoff that pollutes the downstream river.

To help secure clean water here, The Nature Conservancy recently launched the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund. The fund improves water quality and supply by addressing issues at the source.

Working with upstream farmers—starting with those in the steepest and most critical areas—is imperative to reduce the many impacts of development.

Together with our Water Fund partners, our colleagues in Africa are providing nearly 15,000 farmers with the training, resources and equipment they need to help keep the river healthy, conserve water and reap the benefits of higher crop yields and more stable farms. The fund will serve as a model for leaders across the continent as they look for innovative ways to solve ever-increasing

water challenges especially in the face of climate change.

Ensuring access to clean, fresh water as well as water-saving measures is therefore not only socially responsible, it's also smart conservation.

A century ago, New York City ensured the future of its clean water by protecting the forests, mountains, and streams in the Catskill Mountains.

Inspired by this nature-based solution, the Conservancy has developed water source protection funds around the globe. Replicated first in Quito, Ecuador, we aim to launch similar programs in 100 cities worldwide so that millions will have clean water, now and for generations to come.

Long Island Chapter Board Chair Anne Erni

We caught up recently with Long Island Chapter Board Chairman, Anne Erni. When she's not exploring the beaches, wetlands and dunes of Long Island's East End, Anne serves as Chief People Officer for Audible.

What makes you care for nature and want to conserve it?

For me, it all goes back to my youth. I grew up spending a week each August camping in Hither Hills State Park in Montauk. That was our yearly family vacation. My best memories were had there—sleeping in tents, swimming in the cool waves during the day, flying kites in the afternoon when the wind picked up, and catching little toads in the swamps. It was really a magical experience for me every summer.

I live in the city all week and nature's where I go to relax. My husband and I decided to bring up our family out east and buy a home in nearby Accabonac Harbor which is such a beautiful place. Being there is like being in yesteryear, where kids can ride their bikes down the block, go catch hermit crabs, see sunsets and watch the birds.

What do you most care about when it comes to conservation issues?

I'm passionate about understanding the role that nitrogen pollution is playing when it comes to harmful algae in our ponds, our harbors and even in our bays. It really upset me to think that the waters where I like to take my kids swimming might be toxic.

It's exciting to see an organization committed to restoring clean water, tackling climate change and advocating for sustainable energy—all of which are important to me.

What about The Nature Conservancy's work, in particular, appeals to you?

The Nature Conservancy has evolved to meet today's challenges. We use science to understand—and address—the root causes of environmental issues like water pollution. We commissioned studies to find out why fish and shellfish were dying in Long Island's waters and then started to solve the problem. We said, let's lobby state and local governments, let's get funding to replace septic tanks, let's teach local plumbers and contractors how to install advanced septic systems, and let's help people learn how to find an installer. That's the new Nature Conservancy that I've gotten to know and am proud to serve.



Anne Erni, second from left, with her family. © A. Graziano Photography

“Working with The Nature Conservancy to find solutions to challenges is not only important to nature but it's also important to protect my family.”

– Anne Erni

By the Numbers

The Nature Conservancy in New York was born with the preservation of Mianus River Gorge Preserve in 1955. Since then, we've conserved more than 815,000 acres across the state from Long Island to the Adirondacks to Lake Erie. Protected lands help to clean our water, provide wildlife habitat, capture carbon and sustain New York's recreational economy. And our work in New York goes beyond counting acres.

Thanks to your generous support, we are taking on the region's biggest conservation challenges. Here's a sample of what The Nature Conservancy is doing in New York.

\$300 million

in funding secured for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). This record-level investment will improve water quality, create local parks and keep communities resilient to climate change.

\$362 million

approved by Long Island voters for water quality—the single largest such allocation since the 1970s—this investment will reduce harmful nitrogen pollution in Great South Bay.

74,000

tons of carbon are being captured by 612 forested acres recently conserved in the Zoar Valley, an hour outside of Buffalo.

35,000

climate-adapted trees planted in a forest resilience project in Tug Hill. This approach has potential to be applied to other forests across the state.

28,000

native trees planted in Jamaica Bay, Queens to make New York greener.

© The Nature Conservancy



two million

oysters planted at seven sites around the Big Apple to help restore water quality in New York Harbor.

110,000

miles of roadside and shoreline surveyed for invasive plants in the Adirondacks in order to keep native habitats healthy.

6,400

acres conserved in Albany through our *Working Woodlands* program.

80%

of New Yorkers believe climate change is happening, our polling discovered. The majority wants government action to stop it from harming them and their families.

500 million



pounds of Atlantic Menhaden were harvested on the East Coast before The Nature Conservancy advocated to make the catch more sustainable. Menhaden feed marine life including bass, dolphins and whales.

240

volunteers participated alongside Conservancy staff in urban-greening opportunities, such as caring for local trees, in the South Bronx, Harlem and Gowanus neighborhoods.

160

preserves managed across New York, spanning forests, grasslands, lakes, rivers, bays and the ocean.

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SAVE THE DATE: **Saturday, June 29th, 2019** **Let's Celebrate!**

The Nature Conservancy's 2019 Summer Benefit will honor the 20th anniversary of the Community Preservation Fund (CPF), a landmark land and water protection program. Held on the grounds of the Center for Conservation, cocktails and locally grown oysters will be served. Dinner by Glorious Food will be enjoyed under the party tent, followed by dessert and dancing.

For more information, contact:
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