

LONG ISLAND UPDATE | FALL/WINTER | 2018

Long Island depends on us.

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Celebrating a Conservation Milestone



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Dear Member,

Twenty years ago, the landmark Community Preservation Fund (CPF) was established in the five east end towns on Long Island, making it the most powerful local land conservation tool of its time. The CPF has raised over \$1 billion, protecting 10,000 acres of open space and farmland that would have been lost to development. The CPF literally transformed the landscape of the East End—but there was nothing easy about getting it passed.

The visionaries behind the idea—elected officials who collaborated with The Nature Conservancy and many community partners across the East End—knew then that if immediate action wasn't taken, we would lose the way of life we so cherish. Indeed, the CPF has afforded the opportunity to visit nature preserves, enjoy parks, access the water, buy locally-grown produce and enjoy scenic vistas in nearly every community across Riverhead, Southold, Shelter Island, Southampton and East Hampton.

The CPF has also given us a window into the future. Despite its success, land protection alone is not enough to ensure a healthy environment.

Across Long Island, decades of pollution from sewage and other sources has contaminated our bays, harbors and ponds; brown, red, and blue-green tides result in fish-kills and shellfish die-offs. These harmful algal blooms affect waters from Manhattan to Montauk (and throughout the world), and threaten our health, economy and quality of life. Even our drinking water supply is at risk.

To keep our water fishable, swimmable and drinkable, we must dramatically reduce nitrogen pollution. It's time to seize the same energy and can-do spirit to engage leaders and legislators for transformational change, just as we did 20 years ago.

Billions of dollars are needed to replace the 360,000 cesspools and septic systems in Suffolk County and another 50,000 in Nassau County that leach nitrogen into our water. It is a challenge that will take the backing of elected officials, business leaders, community partners, friends and neighbors like you.

Transformational change is only possible with a public chorus demanding action. The question for this generation of Long Islanders is: are we prepared to solve our water quality crisis?

We hope the answer is yes. And let's all agree: The time to act is now.

We thank you for your continued support.

To learn what you can do, visit nature.org/LongIsland or longislandcleanwaterpartnership.org.

Sincerely,

Nancy N. Kelley
Executive Director

Abuzz with Possibility

COUNTING MOSQUITO LARVAE TO REDUCE INSECTICIDE SPRAYING

On Monday mornings throughout the summer, the odor of sunscreen was strong outside the Springs General Store in East Hampton. Here, dozens of volunteer citizen scientists assembled to help in a novel effort to reduce aerial spraying of pesticides in nearby Accabonac Harbor.

Some residents believed that weekly applications of methoprene intended to kill mosquito larvae might have adverse impacts on wildlife. At the same time, Suffolk County's Division of Vector Control believed that "an outright ban on spraying could put lives in jeopardy" if mosquitos were carrying diseases, according to Tom Iwanejko, acting director.

A compromise was reached. Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming brought people together to work toward a cooperative solution, and Conservancy scientists designed this summer's mosquito larvae count program in collaboration with Vector Control.

Led by John Allred and Susan McGraw Keber, town trustees, and Michael Delalio of the East Hampton town planning department, volunteers trekked into this 250-acre wetlands complex every Monday to dip cups into wet areas, count

the larvae, and upload the data using a cellphone app designed by the Conservancy.

By noon, Vector Control had the results in time to decide whether to spray that week, and if so, where.

"We still have to do some treatment when the numbers are high," said Iwanejko, "but when we have sprayed, we have sprayed smaller sections of the marsh."

In fact, there were several weeks when larvae counts were so low that no spraying was needed.

"It's a fantastic partnership," said Legislator Fleming.

While the short-term goal is to reduce pesticide spraying by limiting it to mosquito-breeding "hotspots," a longer-term aspiration is to eliminate the need for spraying altogether through marsh restoration.

"That's my ultimate goal," agreed Iwanejko. "We are looking to reduce the use of pesticides from both a cost and an environmental perspective. We want to treat as little as possible."



© Marian Lindberg/The Nature Conservancy

Since the 1950s, the Conservancy has devoted significant resources to protecting land and maintaining healthy marsh around Accabonac Harbor, East Hampton, one of The Nature Conservancy's priority conservation sites. Keeping the harbor's wetlands thriving is important not only to the myriad of birds, fish and other wildlife that live there but also to the Springs community as a whole. As sea levels rise in the coming decades, the marsh is the first line of defense in protection of local communities. The wetlands here also filter pollutants, like nitrogen, which is degrading water bodies across Long Island.

Today, coastal wetlands in the eastern United States are being lost at twice the rate they are being restored. The Nature Conservancy is working to reverse this trend.



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Protect Lands and Waters

Clean Water Means Great Beer on Long Island and Beyond



The next time you sip your favorite craft beer, take a moment to think about its origins: Beer is 95 percent water. Healthy forests gather water from rain, fog and snow and absorb, purify and slowly release it into Long Island’s underground aquifers before it makes its way to the tap.

Whether you prefer a crisp lager or a toasty stout, every brewer will tell you that clean water is the most important ingredient to a great beer.

Greenport Brewery’s head beer-maker Patrick Alfred concurs. “Water is beer’s most abundant ingredient. You can’t make quality beer without good, clean water. Poor sources of water will always show up in the finished product.”

The Nature Conservancy doesn’t just play a critical role protecting the environment—it also does vital work in ensuring our communities are as resilient as the lands and waters around them. By working both locally and internationally to identify and care for our terrestrial habitats, we’re safeguarding clean water for the places we live, work and play. And for the growing number of brewers who call Long Island home.

Land, Water, Forests and Beer: They’re All Connected

Here on Long Island where fresh and marine waters meet—every drop entering our groundwater aquifers flows to either a drinking water supply source or to the nearest stream, lake, bay or harbor. Unfortunately, many of Long Island’s water bodies are threatened by nitrogen pollution from sewage and other sources. We all can play a role in protecting these at-risk waters.

Recently, Blue Point Brewing Company released a new beer to support a partner organization, Save the Great South Bay, whose mission it is to protect this estuary of national significance.

“We were founded 20 years ago on Long Island’s South Shore, so restoring the waterways in our backyard is extremely important to us,” said Jenna Lally, Blue Point Brewing Company President.

Proceeds from the sale of their beer, called “Drink The Bay Clean,” will help fund restoration efforts in order to improve the South Shore’s resiliency. Native plantings and restored landscapes will help soak up storm-water runoff, mitigate flooding, and improve water quality, according to Save the Great South Bay’s founder, Marshall Brown.



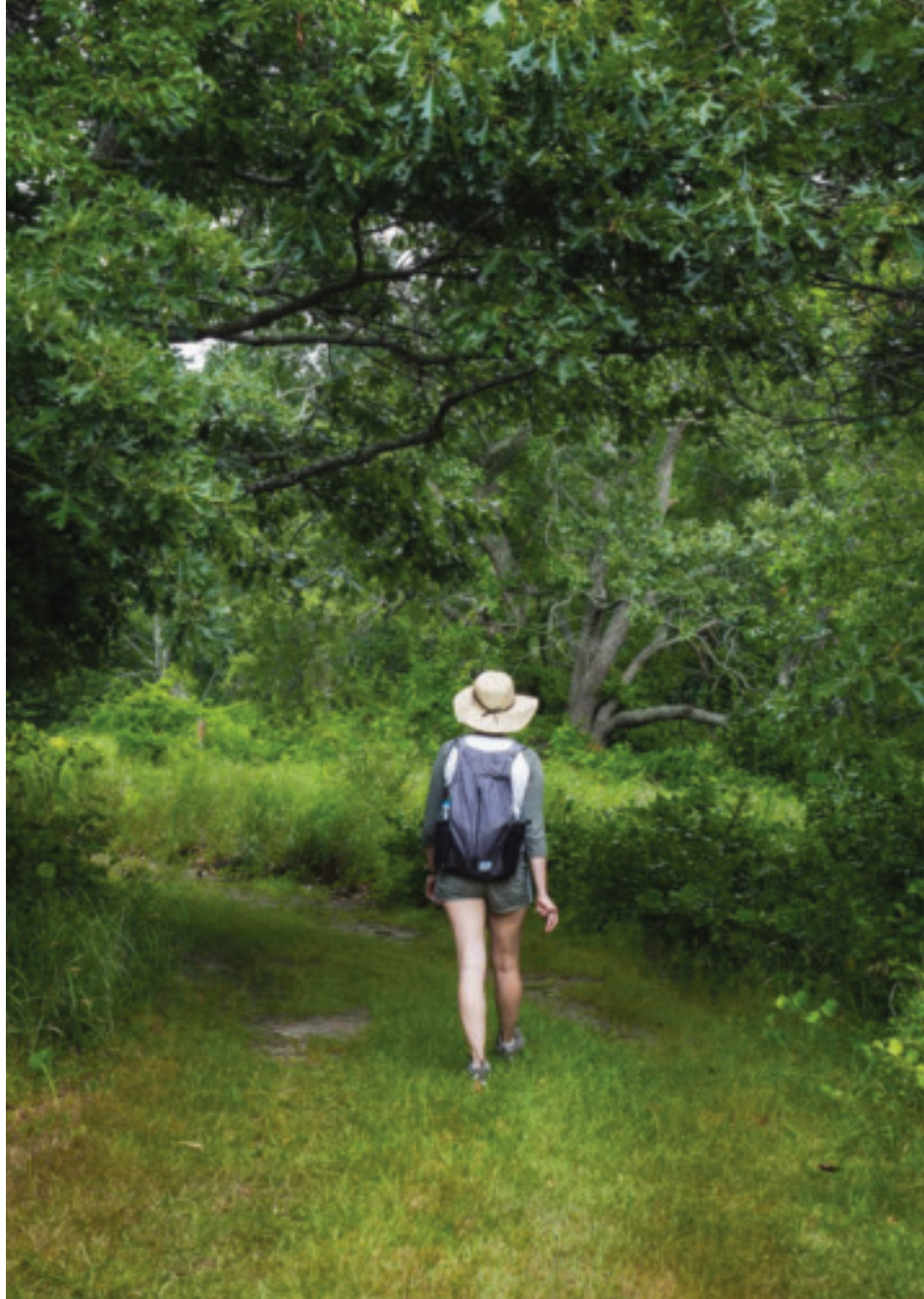
© Mike Busch/Great South Bay Images

Protecting Water Beyond New York's Borders

When you turn on the tap in Quito, Ecuador, the water that emerges does so after a long journey. It starts high in the Andes, flowing through cloud forests and grasslands, picking up snowmelt from glaciers, until it reaches the city's municipal water system. The quality of the water entering Quito, and many other cities around the world, is directly dependent on the landscapes through which the water flows.

Unfortunately, as many of the world's forests and grasslands are degraded or destroyed, threats to drinking water supplies grow. More than five billion people could suffer water shortages by 2050 due to climate change, increased demand and polluted supplies, according to a 2018 United Nations report on the state of the world's water.

Working with partners around the world, The Nature Conservancy developed a Water Funds initiative helping to secure forest protection, reforestation of pastureland, and the planting of cover crops upstream to minimize water treatment costs and reduce shortages. Starting with Quito, the Conservancy has helped launch more than 20 Water Funds to safeguard water for the future.



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Celebrating 25 Years of Pine Barrens Protection

Signed by Governor Mario Cuomo in 1993, the Pine Barrens Protection Act set aside 105,000 acres of woodlands on Long Island. Sponsored by State Sen. Kenneth P. LaValle and then-Assembly member Tom DiNapoli, that state law protected more than 50,000 acres as the “core preservation area” and restricts development on the remaining land.

Today's Long Island Pine Barrens complex is a diverse mosaic of woodlands, forests, swamps, grasslands and streams. The Pine Barrens forests overlie Long Island's sole source of fresh water—its underground aquifer.

Across the United States, more than half of our drinking water is stored and filtered through protected lands such as forests, and many of these habitats are in immediate need of restoration. The Nature Conservancy is working both locally and internationally to identify and care for forests that are especially important to safeguarding clean water supplies.

Access to Nature Passed Down Through Generations

Walking the trail at The Nature Conservancy's Sagg Swamp Preserve, atop a thin blanket of freshly fallen snow, Jonathan Wainwright is on the lookout for animal and bird tracks. He sees several paw prints traversing the trail and smiles. "Even in the dead of winter," he explains, "You can tell what animal life is walking through here and it's filled with birds."

This 105-acre preserve has special meaning to Wainwright. It once belonged to his family. He grew up in nearby Wainscott, East Hampton, once a fishing and farming community where locals sustained themselves by living off the land. Wainwright recalls walking through forests and swamps, and later hunting in wetlands for ducks and in uplands for quail and partridge.

"Clean water is essential for our Long Island existence, but it's a scarce resource and isn't going to be there unless we take care of it."

—Jonathan Wainwright

PRESERVING THE LAND TO PROTECT THE WATER

Sagg Swamp Preserve, like other protected lands in the area, helps keep water clean by filtering out pollutants before they reach the bays, harbors and groundwater supply – important in light of harmful algal blooms plaguing nearby bodies of water such as Georgica and Wainscott Ponds.

Today, the preserve also serves as a living laboratory. The Nature Conservancy is assessing the streams and ponds within and near the preserve for opportunities to enhance the habitat upon which native fish like American eels and alewives depend (read more on page 7). This is an integral part of the Conservancy's efforts throughout New York to restore fragmented lands and waterways so that nature can thrive, providing communities with the clean water and recreational spaces we all value.

"When I was a kid," he explains, "Long Island was the most beautiful place on Earth; it was spectacular. My grandchildren won't know what Long Island is in terms of beauty and the amount of nature it holds unless we continue to protect our precious lands and waters." And that's precisely why the Wainwright Family donated Sagg Swamp to The Nature Conservancy, nearly 50 years ago.

But, preserving the land is not enough. In fact, it may be just the beginning—which is why Wainwright supports ongoing efforts at the site.



Sagg Swamp's trail loops around a wetland making it a good place for family nature outings. A new boardwalk, thanks in part to a recent donation from Candace and Jonathan Wainwright (above, with Land Steward Matthew Grasso), allows visitors to traverse through picturesque swampland.

© Lucy Cutler/The Nature Conservancy

Culvert Operations

As sea levels rise throughout the world and we experience more extreme weather, The Nature Conservancy is looking for innovative ways to ensure that both nature and people remain safe in the face of flooding.

To accomplish this goal on Long Island, The Nature Conservancy worked with towns and transportation officials last year to assess more than 200 culverts (pipes or tunnels) that connect Suffolk County's rivers, streams and wetlands. Oftentimes, culverts are too small to transport water in adequate quantities. Some culverts become blocked with debris, or the pipes are deteriorating and unstable. These problems can cause flooding of towns and roads, deprive marshes of sufficient water, and prevent fish from traveling between water bodies to breed and spawn.

"Well-designed culverts bring safety benefits while also saving communities money, because they last longer and require less frequent maintenance," explains Jessica Price, Landscape Conservation Ecologist. "We look forward to working with towns across Long Island on innovative projects that will contribute significantly to the health of fish, rivers, streams, and wetlands for years to come."

Similar efforts are underway by The Nature Conservancy throughout New York State.



By the Numbers

One Million

culverts—pipes that connect thousands of river, stream and wetland segments—lay under New York's roads and bridges

200

culverts in Suffolk County were examined by Nature Conservancy staff and partners to assess their condition in the past year

8



of Suffolk County's towns are working with the Conservancy to evaluate the condition of wetland and stream crossings and to recommend repairs or replacements

65

miles of previously fragmented fish habitat in the Adirondacks were reconnected in the Ausable River region thanks to culvert replacement

0

maps show all culverts in Suffolk County, which is why the Conservancy is creating an online atlas of where we are at odds with natural river and tidal flows, especially as the climate changes

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The world we depend on depends on us.

SUMMER BENEFIT PREVIEW

300 guests attended The Nature Conservancy’s annual Summer Benefit on Saturday, June 30 at the Center for Conservation—raising over \$1 million for the Conservancy’s work to protect Long Island’s waters and coasts. Attendees were asked to take the “VIP” Clean Water pledge: **Vote** for clean water ballot initiatives, **install** and champion the use of nitrogen-reducing septic systems and **plant** native plants and eliminate chemicals and fertilizers. The event was co-chaired by Anne and Nicolas Erni, Beverly and Michael Kazickas, and Marie and Kenneth Wong.

**SAVE THE DATE:
Saturday, June 29, 2019**

The Nature Conservancy’s 20th Annual Summer Benefit will honor the 20th anniversary of the Community Preservation Fund (CPF), a land and water protection funding program spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy, government officials and community partners.