

# NATURE

**NEW YORK**

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Bill Ulfelder © Jonathan Grassi

## From Our Executive Director

The Nature Conservancy in New York team is making nature more available and accessible to all. We're encouraged to see a variety of groups connecting with nature on our preserves—from a group of veterans on Shelter Island to a community of Latinas in Westchester to the many visitors with disabilities exploring our ADA-compliant trails in the Adirondacks. We're looking at ways to make our preserves accessible to the visually impaired, creating multilingual signage, and enhancing the visitor experience for everyone. I hope you all have the opportunity to visit one of our numerous preserves across the state this summer. Thank you for your support to help make nature accessible to all!

**Find a preserve near you at**  
[nature.org/nypreserves](http://nature.org/nypreserves)

## DONATIONS

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Veterans at Mashomack © Anthony Graziano

## Veterans Connect with Nature

When Shelter Island's Jimbo Theinert isn't teaching mathematics at the local high school, you can find him outside in places like The Nature Conservancy's iconic Mashomack Preserve. With more than 2,000 acres of interlacing tidal creeks, forests, fields and marshes, the preserve is not just home to countless species and the island's pride and joy. It is also a special place where the memory of Jimbo's big brother, Joe, lives on.

The two brothers grew up a few miles from the preserve. "Joe and I spent a lot of time at Mashomack over the years. It was one of his favorite places to come home to during his military career," Jimbo reminisces. Since Joe, an Army First Lieutenant, was killed in action in 2010 in Afghanistan, the preserve's significance has grown for those family and friends he left behind.

In 2011, to connect with the platoon that their son led and loved, Jimbo and his family welcomed the men to visit

Joe's hometown. Together at Mashomack Preserve, a new idea was born—Strongpoint Theinert Ranch (STR), an organization to help veterans and their families heal through the power of nature. "Our goal is to give veterans a space to deal with stress, anxiety and trauma," explains Jimbo, president of STR, "a space to process their losses, share their stories and forge bonds with people who have gone through similar experiences."

Last Veterans Day, to honor Joe and all veterans, The Nature Conservancy was proud to host 20 veterans from across the country at Mashomack Preserve for a wellness retreat in partnership with STR. Vets updated paths for wheelchair access, swam in the icy ocean at dusk, roasted marshmallows, rucked miles of trail and connected with both nature and one another. Jimbo shared, "This is connecting a lot of great things in my life, continuing Joe's legacy, nature and Shelter Island. I'm happy and honored to bring them here."



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## In Nature's Service

### Meet New York Policy Advisor Greg Jacob

**Tell us more about the Veterans in Nature's Service (VINS) resource group at The Nature Conservancy.**

VINS is dedicated to creating a workplace culture of inclusion that helps veterans transition to civilian life and leverage the full potential of their experience. We are dedicated to promoting learning, education and awareness about military veteran employees and their family members, as well as increasing veteran employment at the Conservancy. Part of our mission includes utilizing Conservancy resources to engage with veterans and military communities by hosting retreats and workshops at our preserves across the country.

**As a veteran, how has nature benefited you personally?**

As a Marine Corps combat veteran, I experienced firsthand the restorative power of nature. After leaving the Corps, my time in the woods camping and hiking played a pivotal role in my transition to civilian life by giving me the time and space to reflect on my experience and regenerate the strength and resilience to move forward in life. My work at the Conservancy helps to ensure that the natural spaces that helped me transition will exist for current and future generations of veterans.

**How have the Nature Conservancy retreats with veterans been successful?**

This is our third VINS retreat in two years and they have all been incredible successes. Partnering with veterans organizations to share this time together brings forth a powerful exchange. Our team learns more about veterans, their work ethic and their experiences with conservation during their military service, and the veterans learn about the Conservancy's critical mission to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. VINS plans to continue these retreats well into the future and considers it a privilege to bring veterans to our preserves and offer them beneficial, restorative time in beautiful places.

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19  
million  
acres  
of forests in  
New York for  
all to enjoy

Source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

### Latinas Who Hike



Latinas Who Hike © Danny Sancho

Victoria Buitron is a Latinx woman who loves to hike. She started a group on Facebook, Latinas Who Hike, and a community of women who love the outdoors was born. Nature Conservancy preserve steward Marcela Maldonado invited the group to our Arthur W. Butler Memorial Sanctuary in Bedford. A group of hikers braved the cold on a sunny day in February to explore. Several women shared that before joining the group, they didn't feel brave enough to hike alone. They felt like they would be outsiders in the hiking community, but this group has helped them to feel like they belong. We hope their visit to our preserve helped solidify this sense of belonging.