

FALL IN LOVE WITH NATURE

REVITALIZING THE HEART OF NEW YORK

MEMBER UPDATE
CENTRAL & WESTERN
NEW YORK CHAPTER
FALL/WINTER 2016

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Nature Depends on You



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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.



This fall, just as the leaves were beginning to reveal their hidden colors, we had the pleasure of witnessing another very special transformation: the opening of a new trail in the Finger Lakes linking Hemlock and Canadice Lakes. This trail, which you can read about in the following pages, continues a legacy started many years ago when The Nature Conservancy teamed up with The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the City of Rochester to safeguard Rochester's drinking supply. Thanks to your continued support, we've been able to expand access to this incredible part of the Finger Lakes and, in doing so, have renewed our commitment to one of The Nature Conservancy's most important goals: connecting people to the nature that sustains us.

The experience of seeing more than 100 people of all ages hike "Rob's Trail" for the first time was inspiring. But that was not all we accomplished this year. Our work in the Finger Lakes has also included breaking ground on a new partnership that will revitalize a wetland at Honeoye Lake, restoring nature's ability to provide us with critical services like clean water and safe swimming.

Beyond the Finger Lakes, we also piloted new tools and techniques to tackle invasive species and expanded our Flood Smart Communities project to ensure local people are collaborating on flood protection in a changing climate. With your help, we also protected more than 1,400 acres in places like Tug Hill and the Bristol Hills that join existing protected lands and ensure that wildlife—including migrating birds, black bears and brook trout—have the connected habitat they need.

None of our results would be possible without the special collaboration between Conservancy supporters, volunteers and staff that makes us one of the world's most successful conservation organizations. You'll meet several members of our team in this issue—from a staffer who is celebrating more than 25 years with The Nature Conservancy, to a member who left us his beloved home so that we can build a better future for nature and people. You are part of our team, too. So this fall and winter, fall in love with nature all over again. And remember: We cannot do this work without you.

Susan van der Stricht
Susan van der Stricht
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- ROCHESTER OFFICE: 585-546-8030
- Jim Howe, Executive Director, x7926
- Stevie Adams
Freshwater Conservation Specialist, x7929
- Darran Crabtree
Director of Conservation, 814-332-2946
- Kristin France
Senior Conservation Scientist, 854-554-3404
- Kate Frazer
Communications Manager, 339-222-2014
- Gretchen Holtz, Office Manager, x7932
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315-387-3600
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- Rob Williams, St. Lawrence-Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management Coordinator, x7725

DOUG WILSON: A Life Well Lived



Doug Wilson's passion for the environment was evident in everything he did—from building his own home on the Erie Canal in Palmyra, to bicycling throughout Western New York, to building trails for the Palmyra Community Library. His love of the natural world began with childhood vacations spent on Silver Bay in the Adirondacks.

Doug first joined The Nature Conservancy in 1987 with a \$10 contribution. Twenty years later, he included The Nature Conservancy in his estate plans and displayed his Legacy Club member certificate proudly on his office wall. Over the years, Doug supported projects at Tug Hill, Shaker Heights, the Heart of the Adirondacks and, most recently, the acquisition of a critical property along Eighteenmile Creek in Erie County.

Tragically, Doug died last fall as he was preparing to depart for a vacation in the Adirondacks. Knowing of his long relationship with The Nature Conservancy and commitment to conservation, his sister Barb asked that memorials be made in his name to The Nature Conservancy.

A few weeks later, Conservancy staff learned the full extent of his generosity. In his will, Doug left his beloved home and all of its contents—including tools, lawnmowers and two vehicles—to The Nature Conservancy's Central & Western New York Chapter. Donating his home as a "trade land" allowed Doug to accomplish his goal of supporting the conservation of ecologically important places. "Trade lands" are homes, offices or real estate that the Conservancy is given with the understanding that these properties will be sold to raise revenue for our conservation activities. What's more, donating his home meant Doug's family was not burdened with selling it from afar.

"It was a wonderful gift to me. I could just turn the keys over and know that The Nature Conservancy would handle the sale with the utmost care and respect," said Doug's sister Barb.

Today, you may see Conservancy stewardship staff using Doug's tools to build a bridge at Rob's Trail, or clearing a



trail at Thousand Acre Swamp. You might see staff driving to a meeting about Plan 2014 for Lake Ontario in Doug's fuel efficient hybrid car. And, the proceeds of the sale of his house are funding conservation programs throughout the region.

"Doug always asked insightful questions about our work," said Jan Miller, the Chapter's Senior Philanthropy Officer. "I learned a great deal from his questions. I know he would be very happy that we are putting his gift—all of his gifts—to such good use every day."



The Nature Conservancy

Your real estate can be a gift for nature.

Did you know that all types of property, including homes, apartments or commercial real estate, can benefit conservation? Consider donating your real estate to The Nature Conservancy, and in return, you may be able to reduce taxes, receive income and avoid the hassle of selling the property yourself. We will sell it and use the proceeds to conserve lands and waters around the world.

To learn more, visit nature.org/realstate or call (877) 812-3698.

The minimum gift amount is \$100,000. The Nature Conservancy cannot render tax or legal advice. Please consult with your professional advisor before making a charitable gift. PHOHQ16FY01APGH0XX
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THIS PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT Doug Wilson, photo provided by family; Monitoring conservation easements © The Nature Conservancy (Mat Levine).

COVER © Ben Herndon; THIS PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT © Ben Herndon; © The Nature Conservancy (Jan Miller).



The Nature Conservancy Opens First Trail Linking New York's Only Undeveloped Finger Lakes

On a beautiful fall morning in September, The Nature Conservancy and more than 100 attendees celebrated the completion of a new trail linking Hemlock and Canadice Lakes, the only undeveloped Finger Lakes and the drinking water source for hundreds of thousands of people in Rochester and Western New York.



In 2008, The Nature Conservancy officially opened Rob's Trail, a flagship recreational trail in Springwater, N.Y., where visitors can hike from the steep ridge between Hemlock and Canadice Lakes to the undeveloped shoreline of Canadice Lake. Now, in close partnership with The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), the Conservancy has opened a stunning new trail that gives visitors access to Hemlock Lake as well, and shows how these forests keep drinking water safe and plentiful.



The new trail begins on Conservancy-owned land between Hemlock and Canadice Lake, winds downslope through woods, crosses a stream with a waterfall, and emerges at Hemlock Lake. Once at the lakeshore, hikers can walk north along an abandoned trail and conclude their hike at a boat launch.

"This first-of-its-kind trail will give visitors greater access to Hemlock and Canadice Lakes, the source of Rochester's water supply and one of the only places in the Finger Lakes where you can experience what the region looked like long ago," said Jim Howe, The Nature Conservancy's Central & Western New York Chapter Director. "The Nature Conservancy is proud to be giving New Yorkers this chance to learn about two lakes that have been instrumental to the growth of Greater Rochester."

"Surrounding the only remaining undeveloped Finger Lakes, the Hemlock Canadice State Forest is not only beautiful, but truly unique, containing a large, intact forest as well as tremendous habitat for black bears, lake trout and bald eagles," said Paul D'Amato, NYS DEC Region 8 Director.

The Conservancy's land straddles NYS Route 15A, which provides a ready access point to the Hemlock-Canadice State Forest, a 7,000-acre protected area initially set aside by the City of Rochester to help safeguard its high quality drinking water

supply. In a landmark conservation deal in 2010, the State of New York and the Conservancy teamed up to permanently protect it.

"Rob's Trail – Hemlock Lake gives people access to an environmental gem, but the new trail enhances our economic outlook, too," said Robert Duffy, CEO and President of the Rochester Business Alliance, former New York State Lieutenant Governor and former mayor of Rochester. Clean water, clean air and outdoor recreation are essential ingredients of New York's competitiveness."

New lake-to-lake trail highlights nature's role in protecting Rochester's drinking water

Rob's Trail – Hemlock Lake was funded in part by a grant through the Land Trust Alliance's New York State Conservation Partnership Program.

The new trail was also made possible through the hard work of volunteers—including 95 employees from the Genesee Brewery who dedicated more than 600 hours of time through their Volunteer Time Off program. Local communities, businesses and private donors also made critical financial contributions.

"Since 2006, Xerox and The Nature Conservancy have partnered for

conservation efforts globally and locally, like this trail," said Wendi Latko, Xerox's Vice President for Global Environment, Health, Safety & Sustainability. "Rob's Trail will provide the general public, families and visitors with a place of enjoyment, while at the same time preserving natural resources."

"Rob's Trail – Hemlock Lake is one of the most beautiful short hikes I've ever done, anywhere," said Howard Spindler of the Spindler Family Foundation. "The new trail zig-zags between and across deep gullies—including two picturesque foot

bridges—through deep, old forests, and finally arrives at the shore of pristine Hemlock Lake."

"I'm delighted to have this trail dedicated in honor of my late husband, Rob," added Susan van der Stricht, Chair of The Nature Conservancy's Central and Western New York Chapter Board of Trustees. "The Finger Lakes—especially Hemlock and Canadice Lakes—were two of his favorite places. Rob would be thrilled to know that more people will get to see these two lakes, thanks to The Nature Conservancy's new trail."

 **SUPPORT ROB'S TRAIL – HEMLOCK LAKE**
It's not too late to add your support. Give to our Crowdrise campaign at nature.org/cwny

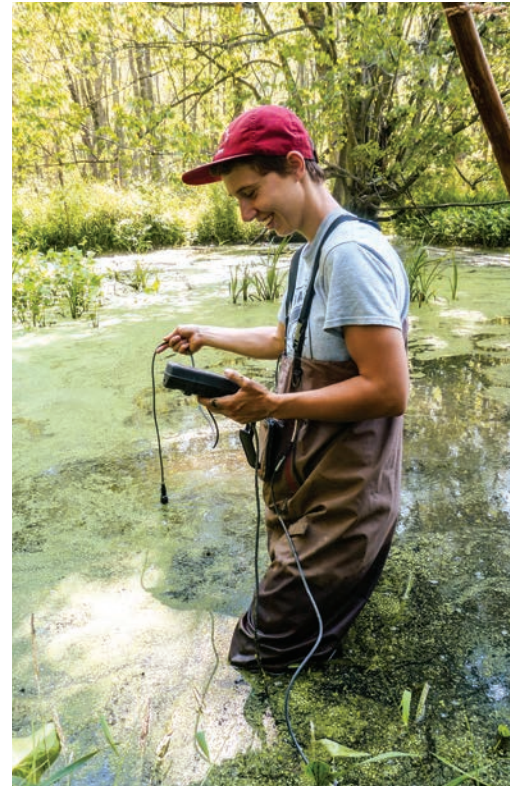
A New Focus on Water Quality in the Finger Lakes

The Nature Conservancy not only conserves land for nature's sake, but to solve critical environmental problems.

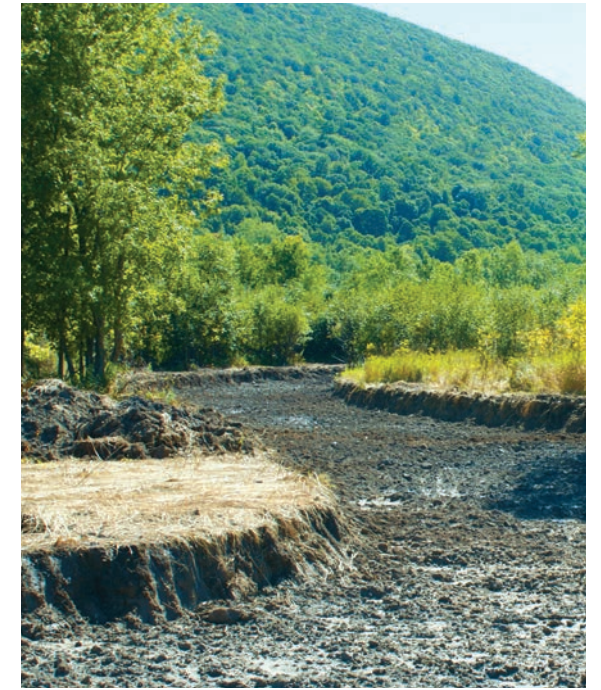
Globally, natural resources are increasingly under threat, which erodes nature's ability to provide services for people such as clean air, flood protection and carbon storage. But one of the things that New Yorkers can count on is an abundant supply of clean, fresh water. Or can they?

For three days in 2014, almost a half-million people on the shores of Lake Erie—one of the world's greatest freshwater resources—found the water from their faucets unsafe. Could a toxic algae bloom like the one that left people without tap water in Toledo, Ohio happen in New York?

There are hundreds of thousands of people who depend on the Finger Lakes for drinking water, but water quality in some of the lakes is showing signs of deterioration. Growing phosphorous loads in our waters are fueling blooms of toxic blue-green algae that impact drinking water and recreation, while also harming fish and wildlife. In the Finger Lakes region, five of the 11 lakes have now experienced blue-green algal blooms, closing swimming beaches and limiting use of the lakes.



In two Finger Lakes, we are now working alongside local watershed groups to restore wetlands and reconnect stream flows to their floodplains so that nature can filter out sediment and nutrients before flows reach the lakes. If successful, these projects will provide a model for water quality improvement in other lakes, ensuring that clean water remains available to local communities.



New Hope for Honeoye

Three years ago, The Nature Conservancy—working with partners including NYS DEC, Honeoye Lake Watershed Task Force, Ontario County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Honeoye Valley Association and Finger Lakes Community College—launched a project to restore a portion of Honeoye Inlet. This fall, a construction crew built a winding 3,700-foot channel designed to slow down the stream's flow and re-connect Honeoye Inlet to its floodplain.

“The newly re-engineered channel will act as a filter to reduce sediment and nutrients otherwise bound for the lake, reducing sediment and nutrient loading in Honeoye Lake by as much as 25-30 percent,” said Stevie Adams, Freshwater Specialist with The Nature Conservancy.

People throughout the Honeoye watershed have stepped up to help. The Nature Conservancy was able to quickly raise private funds to match a \$300,000 state grant that is paying for the lion's share of the restoration. Contributions from over 100 generous donors, with gifts ranging from \$10 to \$3,000, allowed us to reach our goal.

Getting Creative for Canandaigua

The Conservancy is now spearheading a similar effort at Naples Creek, which is one of the largest contributors of sediment and nutrients to Canandaigua Lake. While the Conservancy was able to work on existing state land at Honeoye, that's not the case at Canandaigua Lake. Instead, private lands at the heart of the



restoration site needed to be acquired, so the Conservancy purchased a 78-acre tree farm and nursery that features a long stretch of degraded stream and floodplain habitat.

“Conserving this parcel is allowing us to begin to restore water and habitat quality in the Naples Creek system and in Canandaigua Lake as a whole,” Adams said. “The wetlands and floodplains we'll be restoring here will treat nutrients and sediments originating on thousands of acres of upstream land and help absorb floodwaters.”

Just as at Honeoye Lake, partnerships are fundamental to success: NYS DEC, the Town of Naples and the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council are teaming up with the Conservancy to get the job done. Your partnership is needed, too.



SUPPORT HEALTHY WATERS

To help us raise the additional funds needed to launch our Canandaigua Lake Restoration project, please contact Jan Miller at jan_miller@tnc.org or (585) 546-8030 x7928

Flood Smart, CLIMATE READY

TOWNS BUILD RESILIENCY BY INVESTING IN NATURE

Learning to adapt to a changing climate is no simple task, especially for communities along coasts and large water bodies. The Nature Conservancy is dedicated to helping these communities build resiliency in areas that are vulnerable to flooding by identifying or engineering solutions that are both science- and nature-based. However, a one-size-fits-all solution doesn't exist, and even within New York State, our strategies vary depending on the needs of the communities and ecosystems in question.

Fighting Flooding...Together

For instance, in the towns of Hilton, Greece and Parma, which share Lake Ontario tributaries and regularly experience flooding, we formed a team comprised of local municipal representatives to empower local governments to make flood-smart decisions. The results have been inspiring. After nearly two and a half years of work, our data are demonstrating the urgency of the issue to elected officials. With an enhanced understanding of how connected their ecosystems are and the impact of flooding on public resources, they have developed a newfound commitment to not only protecting their own towns, but to considering the wellbeing of surrounding towns.

"We are collaborating like never before," said one participant. "I admit that in the beginning I had a

hard time considering social impacts of flooding," said another. "But it really highlights a specific sensitivity in the community and a corresponding demand on public resources. I'm not sure we would ever get a clear picture of that without this body of work."

Thanks to the high level of local involvement, local governments have already signaled their eagerness to begin implementing the team's recommendations.

Writing the Next Chapter

The Nature Conservancy has always wanted to apply the Flood Smart Communities methodology in an area where flooding is even more severe. We got that opportunity last year, when New York State Sen. Tom O'Mara (R-Elmira) designated \$250,000 in state funds for a Flood Smart Communities project in Steuben County. We are currently working with project partners, including the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board, to develop a work plan and budget for the project, which is scheduled to kick off in late winter.

If we strive to keep development out of flood-prone areas, fully utilize natural infrastructure like wetlands, and install rain gardens to absorb storm water, we can create flood-smart communities where everyone—from farmers to scientists to nature enthusiasts—can thrive.



Fighting Aquatic Invasives

Winning the Battle Starts with Science and Stewards

2016 marked the first season of an intense effort to reduce the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species through both community outreach and the expansion of an innovative project to quickly detect the species already in our waters.



Helping Boaters Help Nature

Thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund, The Nature Conservancy deployed four Aquatic Invasive Species stewardship specialists at busy boat launches along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario this summer. For 12 weeks, stewards worked at Oswego Harbor, Henderson Harbor, Sackets Harbor and Cape Vincent discussing the threat of invasives with boaters, engaging them in prevention efforts and gathering critical data.

"The data these stewards collected tells a real story about the species that are entering, where boaters are traveling, and how they can help reduce the threat," said Rob Williams, Invasive Species Program Coordinator for the SLELO-PRISM (St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management). Stewards interacted with more than 1,000 boaters and observed invasive species such as round goby, zebra mussel, quagga mussel, curly pondweed, water chestnut and spiny waterflea. Invasives were found on 26 percent of boats early in the season and 41 percent of boats later in the season, and 92 percent of participants received "Clean-Drain-Dry" literature to help them reduce the spread of invasives through careful boat care.



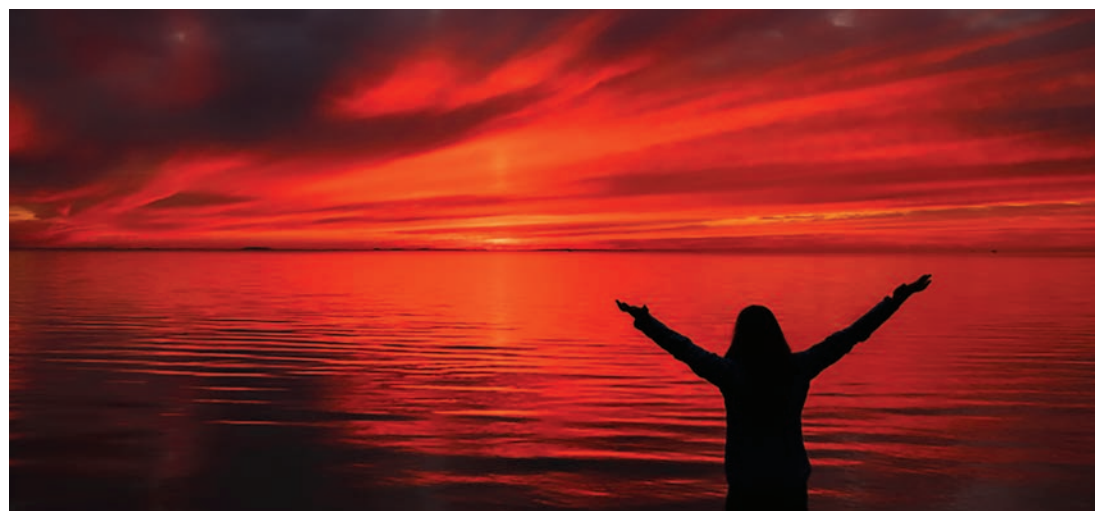
High-tech Surveillance by Scientists and Citizens

Also this summer, The Nature Conservancy used the latest technology to find invaders before they spread. Like many of the crime labs in today's most popular TV shows that use DNA to tie the criminal to the crime scene, we are using eDNA and underwater video as surveillance tools to monitor for aquatic invasive species. In the Great Lakes alone, aquatic invasive species inflict economic costs of hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Because all fish shed DNA material into the environment through mucus and excrement, eDNA detects the presence of different species through the collection of water samples that are filtered in the lab and analyzed for target species' DNA. eDNA samples have been used to detect the presence of Asian carp in streams that lead to the Great Lakes, as well as in western Lake Erie and parts of northern Lake Michigan.

This summer, Nature Conservancy staff together with volunteer citizen scientists surveyed strategic areas along Eastern Lake Ontario including the Salmon River Estuary, Chaumont River, French Creek and the Oswego River.

The samples and video collected are now being analyzed. While positive results are not good news, they do have a silver lining. Surveillance techniques of the past had a limited chance of detecting new introductions, especially when hidden beneath the water. Now, eDNA and underwater video make early detection and control possible—right down to the molecular level.





Discover New Places

CONSERVANCY PROTECTS CRITICAL LANDS

Thanks to your generous support, we've added several new properties this year to our network of protected lands across Central and Western New York.

708 ACRES

of forests and streams added to our Tug Hill Conservation Area. In April, we purchased this property with funds from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant pursued by The Nature Conservancy in partnership with Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. The land has an active hunting lease that will provide funds for an ongoing payment in lieu of taxes agreement we maintain for the benefit of local towns, school districts and Lewis County.

78 ACRES

of floodplain to make a Finger Lakes water quality project possible. In August, we acquired 78 acres along Naples Creek at the south end of Canandaigua Lake, adjacent to Hi Tor Wildlife Management Area, which will be the centerpiece of a landmark Finger Lakes water quality revitalization effort (see story p. 6-7).

582 ACRES

of forest to be added to Honeoye Inlet Wildlife Management Area. Also in April, we acquired 582 acres of forest in the Bristol Hills between Honeoye and Canandaigua Lakes. We ultimately will be transferring these lands to NYS DEC to grow the Honeoye Inlet Wildlife Management Area, a 2,000-acre protected area in Ontario County that's home to black bear, black-throated blue warblers, brook trout and northern harriers.

46 ACRES

of mature forest added to our Tug Hill Conservation Area. In July, we acquired a 46-acre property on Tug Hill that includes a healthy, mature forest and adjoins our 16,500-acre Tug Hill Conservation Area, a region of unbroken forests and pristine wetlands nestled between Lake Ontario and the Adirondacks.



MANY MORE LAND CONSERVATION PROJECTS ARE UNDERWAY.

Know of a special place in need of protection? Contact Andrew Wheatcraft, Critical Lands Coordinator, at awheatcraft@tnc.org or (585) 546-8030 ext. 7933.

3 Questions for David Klein

25 YEARS IN CONSERVATION ... AND COUNTING!

David Klein began his career at The Nature Conservancy doing something he still loves: counting birds on the beach. As a "tern and plover" volunteer at Lido Beach in Hempstead, Long Island, David tried to protect nesting sites of birds he would later come to help in even bigger ways. Today, as Senior Field Representative for The Nature Conservancy's Central & Western New York Chapter, he works to revitalize the watershed, coastline and open waters of Lake Ontario for people and nature—birds included.

We asked David three questions to understand how his work has evolved in the past 25 years and what keeps him going.

Q: What was your first big project for The Nature Conservancy?

A: In 1991, when I was Director of the Central & Western New York Chapter, we needed to raise \$160,000 to buy a large tract of land in Chaumont Barrens under a very tight deadline. Back then there was no Environmental Protection Fund, no state money and very few land trusts. Our trustees really stepped forward, just like today. At the time, it seemed like an immense amount of money, but we all pulled together and raised it in time. Once we owned the land, the work was far from done. Our small staff needed to figure out how to design and build a trail. We've come a long way since then. The chapter has now helped to protect nearly 100,000 acres and owns and manages more than 30,000 acres of preserves. The places we protected long ago keep surprising us, too. Just last year a rare orchid was discovered at Chaumont.

Q: What is one of the most exciting places your work has taken you?

A: I've been lucky to see our work in places like Chiapas, Mexico, and the Tallgrass Prairie of Oklahoma, but the Rivers of Siberia conference I attended in 2013 was one of the most fascinating experiences of my career. I was very impressed by Russia's active, sophisticated and assertive environmental NGOs. And the scale of their freshwater resources is incredible. One lake, Lake Baikal, contains as much water as all of the Great Lakes combined. I was invited there to present on the bi-national effort to improve the management of water levels on Lake Ontario. Plan 2014 would expand hydropower and restore 64,000 of acres of wetland in the process. Russian conservationists and hydropower engineers were very interested in how new water regulations could consider the needs of all lake users as well as the environment.

Q: What gives you hope and keeps you continuing this work?

A: I'm a 'glass half full' kind of guy and have been inspired by the actions of many people over the years. I've had the pleasure to work with the dedicated band of neighbors who came together to make a very small land purchase at Thousand Acre Swamp that has since grown to more than 700 acres. Today, I get to work on projects like Plan 2014 that will mitigate decades of damage. If implemented, it will be a clear demonstration of our society's ability to value the environment and understand that the world we depend on depends on us.



ON THE WEB

Find out more about our plan to save Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River at supportplan2014.org

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