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Conservation News

SPRING/SUMMER 2015

Working Woodlands

Do you know that the destruction of forests contributes more to global greenhouse gas emissions than all the cars, trucks, planes, trains and ships in the world combined? In New York, we are fortunate that forests cover 63% of our lands with 18.9 million acres of woodlands. Not only do forests keep the air and water clean, contribute to our quality of life and provide a livelihood for thousands of people each year, trees also remove significant carbon emissions from the air.

Working Woodlands, a new program in New York modeled after the Conservancy's successful forest conservation program in Pennsylvania, encourages landowners to preserve forests by rewarding them for the carbon their trees capture and store.

Through Working Woodlands, our forest ecologists work with landowners to analyze the ecological potential of their property – as wildlife habitat and for fighting climate change. A sustainable forest management plan is created for the property.

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Dear Friends,

At The Nature Conservancy, we work to identify and solve the world's significant environmental challenges. In this newsletter, we share with you examples of actions we are taking to address climate change, one of the most critical issues of our day. We'll introduce you to Working Woodlands, a new forest conservation program in New York that aims to protect critical forests while improving private forest management, providing revenue for landowners and fighting climate change. We'll take you to the Hudson Valley where a regional effort is underway to develop and implement a Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan to provide an inventory of community–based restoration and adaptation projects to improve habitat conditions and community resilience. And we'll introduce you to an 18-year-old who through her volunteer service is helping to connect others in her community to the natural world.

Our ability to find solutions that will sustain all of us today and in the future are made possible because of our committed members, and volunteers, like you! We are grateful for all your support.

Sincerely,

Anthony M. Wilkinson
Acting Executive Director

P.S. In an effort to reduce both mailing and printing costs, this newsletter will be the final printed version that we mail. We encourage you to sign-up at nature.org/eastern to receive our monthly e-newsletter, *Great Places*. Remember to visit us online to learn what's happening around New York and how we are working to preserve our natural resources for future generations.

Printed on 90% recycled (including 30% PCW), process chlorine-free paper, creating the following benefits:

4.3 trees preserved for the future	12.3 lbs water-borne waste not created	199.8 lbs solid waste not generated	392 lbs net greenhouse gases prevented

Front Cover: Conservation information manager Dave Richardson uses a prism to measure the current and potential carbon value of a forested landscape. © CHRIS ZIMMERMAN/TNC; **Above:** Anthony W. Wilkinson © TNC.

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Profile in Gold

Ariel Wapnick, a member of the Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson, chose to combine her passion for animals with a desire to educate people about wildlife into a volunteer project for The Nature Conservancy. For her Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting, Ariel researched, designed and wrote a preserve guide for Thompson Pond Preserve in Pine Plains, New York. She will also build and install wood duck houses, trail markers, and a drop-off box for the guides at the preserve.

Having designed a walking guide to a local zoo for her Silver Award, Ariel knew she wanted to continue to put her copywriting and design skills to use in a project related to the outdoors.

"My teacher sparked my interest in Thompson Pond when she told me about the pitcher plants that live there. I had never heard of them and wanted to know more," says Wapnick. "I am fascinated by the history of the region and the unique plants and bogs found here."

"Ariel's creativity and desire to make her community a better place will not only earn her the Gold Award, but it will also enhance the visitor experience at Thompson Pond," says conservation lands manager Matt Levy. "We are glad that Ariel chose a Conservancy preserve for her project and look forward to working with her to complete the on-the-ground work."

To explore Thompson Pond and other area preserves, visit **nature.org/nyplaces**

Girl Scout Ariel Wapnick at Thompson Pond. © DYAN WAPNICK

Mapping A River

While the Hudson River is one of the most studied estuaries in the world, The Nature Conservancy is taking a fresh look at extensive existing data to see where river habitat could most benefit from restoration. This is the starting point for developing the first Comprehensive Restoration Plan for the Hudson.

A first step in the development of the Plan is to understand the distribution and abundance of habitats. Scientists at the Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University are working to develop a physical habitat model of the Hudson River Estuary, from the Tappan Zee Bridge to the Federal Dam at Troy.

Freshwater project manager Andy Peck explains how this unique management tool can provide a more complete understanding of the river's important habitat patterns and the way it is used by fish, wildlife, and people.

Q: Why make a habitat map?

Habitat maps are a powerful tool to visualize a river's environment. They help scientists understand the distribution, extent and quality of habitats. By allowing us to picture what we have, we can begin to determine what restoration actions we will need to take to restore the vitality and resiliency of the river.

Q. How were the maps created?

Scientists combined a number of digital maps of different types – bathymetry maps that depict the depth and shape of the river bottom, high resolution aerial photographs, soil maps and hydrology maps – to generate the habitat maps. Combining this information into a single database enables us to identify areas of similar habitat characteristics such as those that are well suited to support aquatic plants and juvenile fish.

Fresh water project manager Andy Peck speaks to Hudson Valley stakeholders at an informational meeting about a Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan. © TNC.

Q. How will the maps be used?

Knowing where similar habitats are located lets us model their current condition and explore the habitat's vulnerability to sea level rise. Combining the location with information such as surrounding land use, public access points, and known fish spawning areas can help guide decisions about where restoration and management may be appropriate and may provide multiple benefits. Additionally, by incorporating sea level rise projections, we can reasonably predict how the current habitat mosaic could shift in 2050, which can help natural resource managers and municipalities plan for future conditions.

Q. What happens next?

Once the habitat modeling and assessment are complete, Partners Restoring the Hudson, a public/private partnership comprised of many not-for-profit organizations and academic institutions that are working together, in consultation with state and federal agencies, will be able to identify large areas of the estuary where to focus preservation, restoration and adaptation activities.

The partnership is working with communities to identify places where restoration and adaptation activities will benefit both people and nature. This information will be layered over the habitat maps to assess how addressing community needs and interests can dovetail with restoration of the most critical habitat areas.

To learn more about a Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan, visit **thehudsonweshare.org**

Working Woodlands *continued from the front cover*

The plan entails Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forest certification along with the creation of carbon credits – a financial tool that assigns a value to the service that trees provide by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

FSC certification, as well as the sale of carbon credits, offers financial benefits for the landowner. Timber with an FSC certification can be sold at a premium and the carbon credits create an added source of income for the landowner. Corporations, small businesses, and even airline travelers can buy carbon credits through a variety of voluntary markets where carbon credits are bought and sold to offset the environmental damage caused by their own greenhouse gas emissions.

"For landowners who choose to participate in the program," says senior conservation manager Troy Weldy, "Working Woodlands offers one way they can derive value from their property while ensuring that the forest remains healthy and productive for future generations."

Explore our forest work at **nature.org/nyforests**

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Explore the Outdoors

Our 2015 calendar is filled with a variety of fun activities for people of all ages. Join us at local parks, preserves and beaches in the New York City area and around the state to enjoy nature and learn about wildlife and the natural world. View our events calendar and register at **nature.org/nyevents**

Hikers enjoy a guided walk led by conservation ecologist Chris Zimmerman at the Perry Preserve in Dover Plains, New York. © TNC