

NATURE

NEW YORK

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Bill Ulfelder © Theo Morrison

From Our Executive Director

Water: an element that connects all New Yorkers. From drinking our morning coffee to splashing in our beaches, lakes and rivers, it is essential to our way of life.

At The Nature Conservancy your clean water is our priority. In New York we've helped secure billions of dollars to improve water quality on Long Island and led the effort to make a healthier Lake Ontario for the surrounding communities and wildlife.

And we know a great idea when we see one, which is why we are taking New York City's model of protecting forests and rivers in the Catskills to provide abundant, clean water to New Yorkers and replicating it in more than 50 cities around the world.

We're proud to pioneer new strategies and deliver clean water to New Yorkers and those who need it.

Bill Ulfelder, Executive Director

A stylized signature of Bill Ulfelder in black ink.

DONATIONS:

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A swim on a sunny day © Anthony Graziano

Lake Ontario: Making a Small Change for a Big Impact

In December 2016, the International Joint Commission of the U.S. and Canada unanimously approved Plan 2014—a bold effort to change the management of the Moses Saunders Dam to work with the power of nature rather than against it. With the flip of a few switches, water levels in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River will vary just enough to more closely mirror seasonal ebbs and flows. This single policy decision will dramatically improve conservation in the Great Lakes, the largest freshwater body on Earth. This restoration effort is breathing new life into a body of water the size of New Jersey, bringing new hope to both the wildlife that live within it and the people who rely on it for drinking water, food, recreation, power and jobs. In fact, New York will see an increase of \$12 million annually in economic value as a result of this new plan.

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For nearly 20 years, The Nature Conservancy worked relentlessly toward this day with state and federal governments, local communities, elected officials from both parties, environmentalists, outdoor enthusiasts and industries. The solution had to help protect shoreline property owners from flooding, allow species like black terns to access new habitat, generate clean energy and contribute to community prosperity. Balancing these goals is a tremendous feat and one that took the unwavering support of our members and the efforts of many committed people. But our work is far from over. The challenges of coastal living demand continued attention and action—especially as the climate changes—and the Conservancy stands ready to work with communities, property owners and state, provincial and federal leaders on lasting solutions that will make the shoreline more resilient.



Clockwise from top left: Taking a closer look at a fledgling oyster © Kevin Arnold; Urban Marine Ecologist, Mike McCann © The Nature Conservancy (Lauren Whatley); A ride in New York Harbor © Talisman Brolin

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What is Water Worth?

Water quality has real economic impacts, and many jobs depend on clean water. This is especially true on Long Island, where nearly half of the economy relies on water according to our recent report, “The Dollars and Sense of Investing in Clean Water.”



George Remmer, fisherman, hopes improved water quality will restore Great South Bay © Red Vault Productions

Hope for New York Harbor

Meet Urban Marine Ecologist, Mike McCann

What does a day in the life of an Urban Marine Ecologist look like? Some days I’m wearing chest waders in the East River, riding on a boat in Jamaica Bay or working with students on the docks of Governors Island. When I’m not on the water, I’m analyzing water samples in the lab, raising shellfish in the hatchery or analyzing new data. The variety is one of the best parts of my job!

Why does conservation (or your work) matter to you? Every time a ferry sounds its fog horn, I visit a waterfront park or I bike over the Manhattan Bridge, I am reminded that New York is a city built on water. This water is the reason humans settled here in the first place, and today, New York Harbor is at a crossroads. With a long history of degradation and a recent trend of recovery, our community must continue to build on environmental successes while simultaneously addressing the rising threats of climate change and sea-level rise. It is an exciting time to envision what these waters and this city will look like in 50 or 100 years. I am thrilled to play a role in shaping that future.

How has your work involved the local community and what are the benefits of that collaboration? The Nature Conservancy is partnering with the Billion Oyster Project, whose goal is not only to restore one billion oysters to the harbor, but also to engage and educate thousands of New York City students. That means when I design methods to monitor the success and benefits of oyster restoration, I aim to create methods that are both accessible to students and citizen scientists and scientifically rigorous. The students and community members who help me monitor oysters or water quality are not only collecting valuable data, but I hope, they are forming a connection to the harbor and all of its creatures.

What happens when water quality declines? In the 1970s, more than half the nation’s clams came from Long Island—which meant employment opportunities for clambers, processors and distributors. Fast forward to the present. Now, there are only 52 jobs, based on full-time equivalency, in commercial fishing in Nassau and Suffolk Counties combined. Even sectors with a less obvious connection to water—such as the health care industry, the dominant employer on Long Island—rely on abundant supplies of clean water from the island’s aquifer.

This new report shows that the connection between clean water and thriving communities is undeniable. The Conservancy will continue our work to reduce sources of pollution to New York’s drinking water and its many bays, ponds, lakes and streams.

Read the full report at nature.org/liwaterreport.



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