

**OUR PROMISE
TO THE WORLD**

IS TO PROTECT THE
LANDS & WATERS
ON WHICH ALL LIFE DEPENDS
-WITH YOUR HELP IT

**WILL BE
KEPT**



**CONNECTICUT
ANNUAL REPORT
2017**

James C. ... 2017

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN CONNECTICUT

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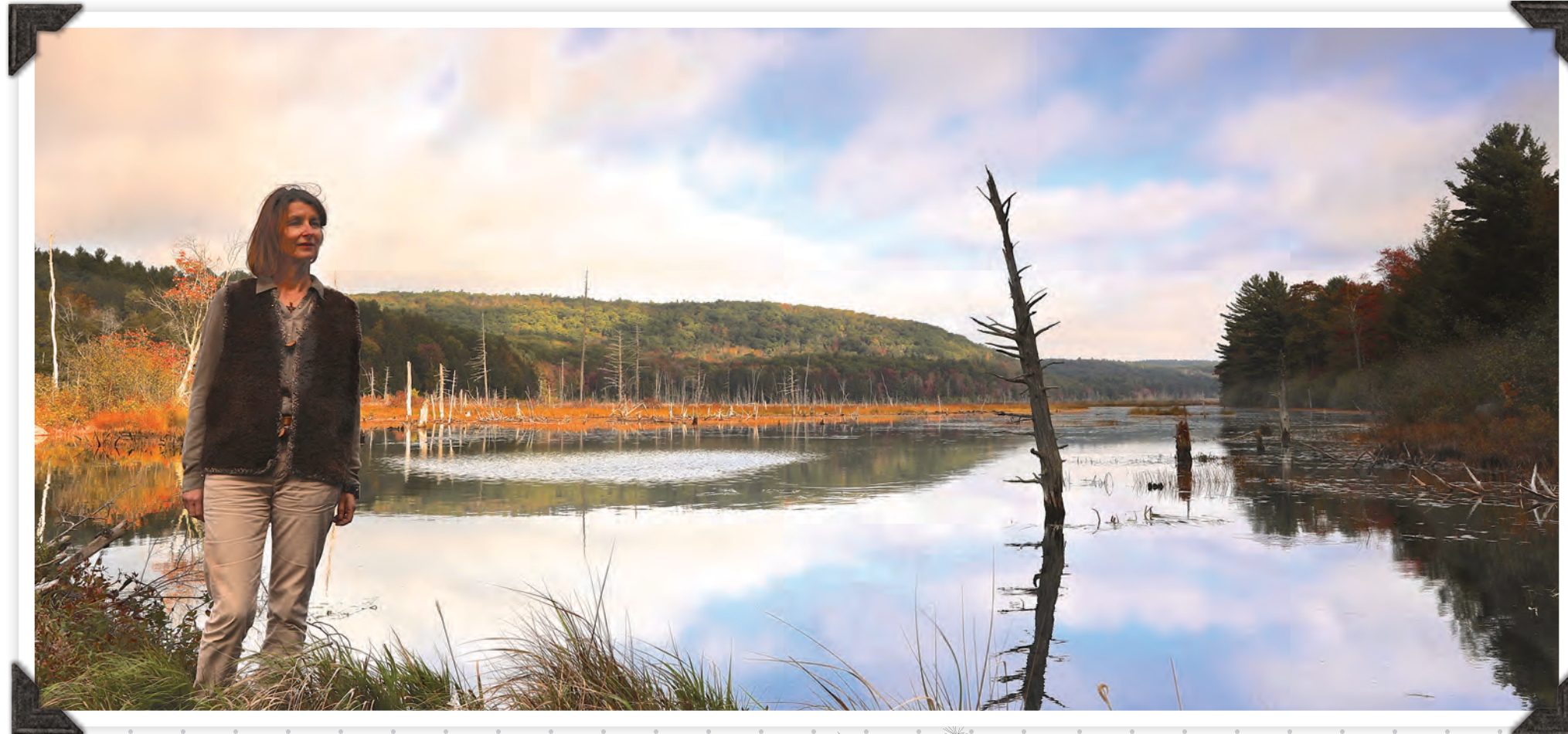
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ABOUT THE COVER:

The cover art was created especially for this annual report by artist James Prosek, who has had a long affiliation with the Conservancy and now serves on the board of TNC in Connecticut. This piece is part of a larger body of Prosek's work that employs silhouettes of organisms clustered together to make commentaries about the interdependence of all life forms in an ecosystem. Images courtesy of James Prosek and Singer | Wajahat, New York

WRITTEN BY: Francine Monahan

THIS PAGE: State Director Frogard Ryan at Beckley Bog in Norfolk, CT © TNC (Ray Uznas)

Dr. Frogard Ryan

State Director,
The Nature Conservancy
in Connecticut



Dear Friends:

Few things make me feel more hope and joy than hiking outside in nature. Looking out across the glistening waters and murky marshes of Beckley Bog in Norfolk one recent autumn morning, I was reminded of just how important each type of ecosystem is to our planet, and how they are all connected in some way. We are all connected

as people, too, so what we do in our state and our hometowns can have far-reaching impacts. The Nature Conservancy recognizes that, and that's why with our presence in 50 states and 70 countries, we are tackling some of the most urgent conservation challenges with solutions, at scale.

Mother Nature is speaking to us in powerful terms, and this past year we heard the message clearly. Unprecedented flooding, devastating hurricanes and wildfires have emphasized the need for action. At The Nature Conservancy, the last 60 years have taught us to pay attention to these signs from nature and develop innovative ways to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. This has us thinking globally, and acting locally.

That's especially true here in Connecticut. With your help and the staff's expertise, we proactively get in front of the state's most pressing issues, and wherever the needs arise, we adapt our work to meet them. Whether it's expanding our coastal resilience work into other states, or inspiring the development of new freshwater programs all the way in India, we're bringing our knowledge, and your investments, to as many places as we can, to make the biggest impact.

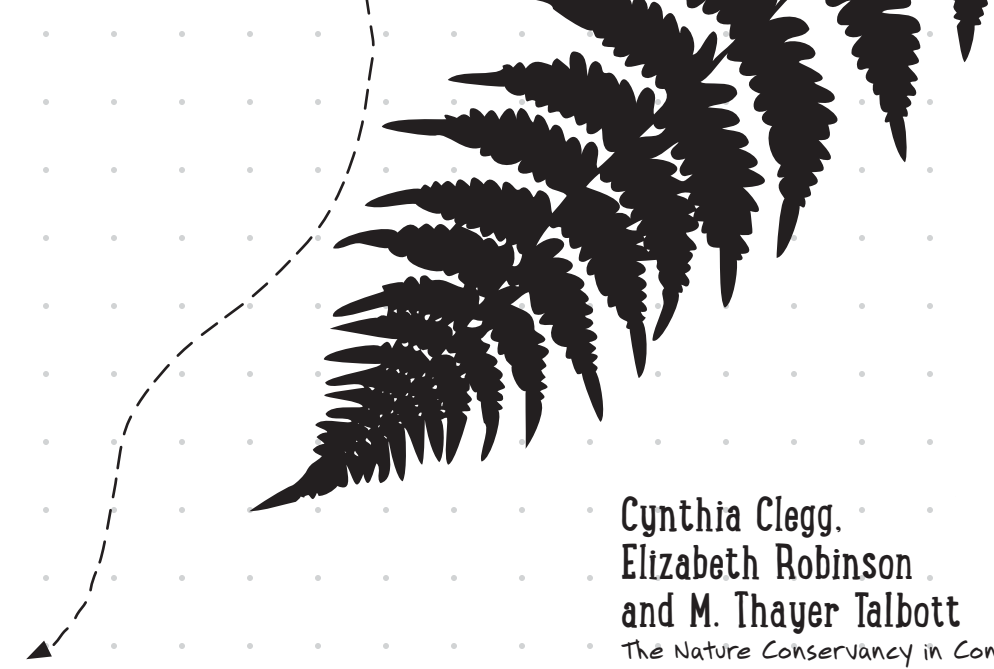
In this annual report, you will read about some of the exciting successes the Connecticut Chapter has achieved in 2017, as well as personal thoughts from a few of our closest friends and supporters on what our work means to them. We love this beautiful state, and we are inspired by the way every one of our trustees, supporters and staff work together to make it even better. When we listen to the natural world around us here, we improve the rest of the world, too.

Thank you for your passion, support and dedication to helping us keep our promise of protecting the lands and waters on which all life depends. We couldn't do it all without you.

KEEPING THE PROMISE OF CONNECTING US TO NATURE

LAND. Keeping a Legacy Alive

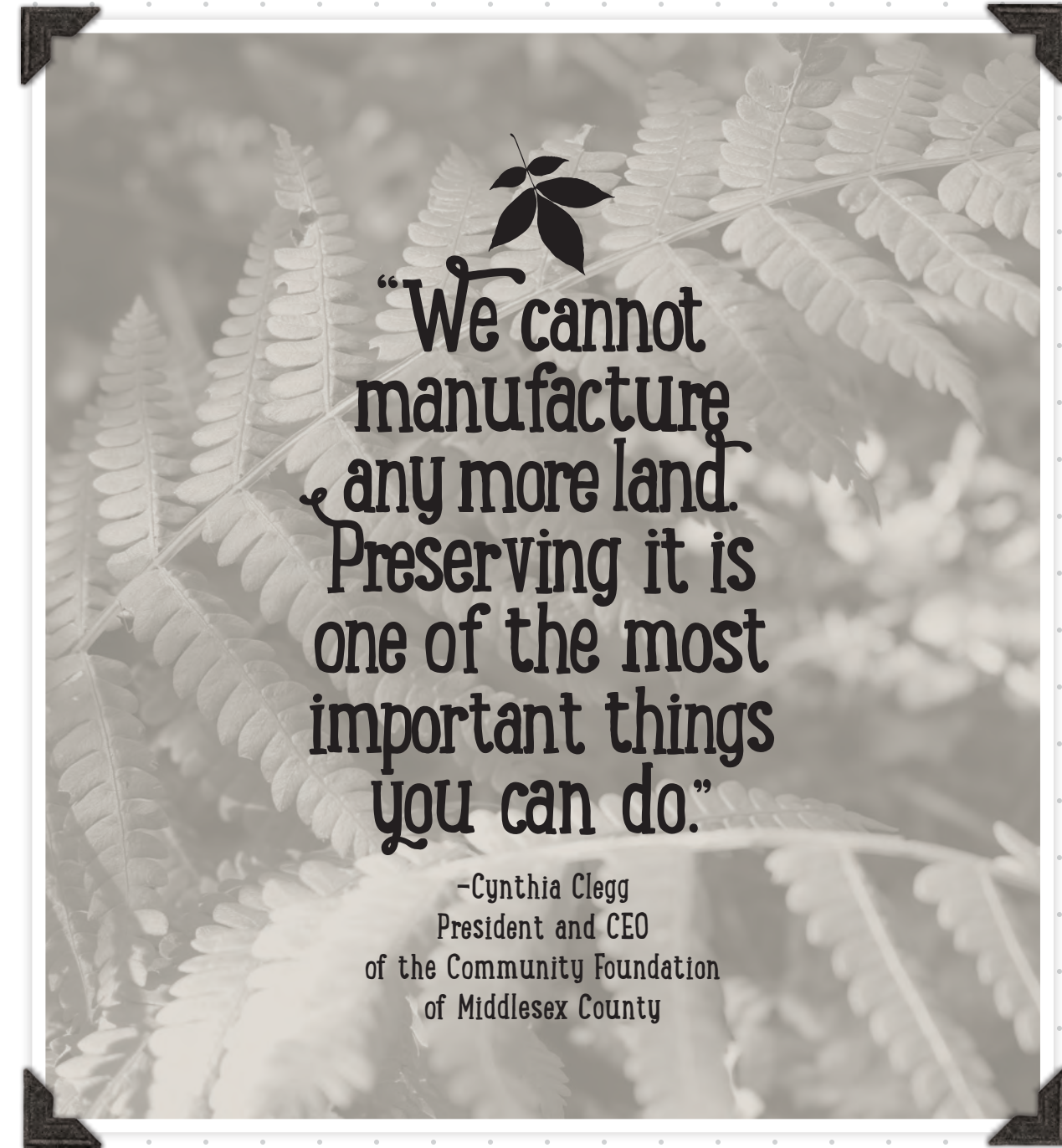
On a balmy August afternoon, three friends walked through a dense Eastern Connecticut forest, laughing and reminiscing.



The scene lends itself well to The Nature Conservancy's preserves, but the best part is that the three advocates for nature are also partners in conservation, and the preserve they visited is one of our chapter's oldest: Burnham Brook in East Haddam.

"What you do here is all about the quality of life for all of us. We cannot manufacture any more land," President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Middlesex County Cynthia Clegg said to the Connecticut Chapter's Land Steward Elizabeth Robinson. "Preserving land is one of the most important things you can do. I love seeing that you're evolving, as the needs of the world and the general local community have evolved."

Cynthia Clegg, Elizabeth Robinson and M. Thayer Talbott
The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut's Burnham Brook Preserve, East Haddam



"We cannot manufacture any more land. Preserving it is one of the most important things you can do."

-Cynthia Clegg
President and CEO
of the Community Foundation
of Middlesex County

Elizabeth, who has been a Conservancy land steward for the Eightmile River Watershed for nearly four years, agreed with Cynthia, adding that The Conservancy's mission has expanded in recent years to connect people and nature.

"You can't connect people to nature if you don't have a beautiful spot for them to come to, to get inspired, to feel connected," she said.

The late Dr. Dick Goodwin, a botanist and one of The Conservancy's founders, and his wife Esther, donated this land to The Conservancy in the hopes of protecting the place where he and his neighbors felt such a strong connection. Now the spirit of Dr. Goodwin lives on. His legacy helped make Burnham Brook Preserve what it is today — a destination that not only serves as a beautiful place for visitors, but also an indicator of freshwater health and a connector to other Eastern Connecticut watersheds and the Sound.

The Community Foundation and The Conservancy agree that connecting people to nature is a priority. To do that, we make most of our preserves accessible. We keep trails safe, clean, and easy to traverse, and control the most aggressive invasive species. It also helps to educate the next generation of environmentalists, to ensure that this important work continues.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Cynthia Clegg, President and CEO, Community Foundation of Middlesex County; Elizabeth Robinson, Nature Conservancy in Connecticut Land Steward; M. Thayer Talbott, Vice President of Programs and Operations, enjoying a discussion at the Connecticut Chapter's Burnham Brook Preserve, in East Haddam @ TNC (Andrew Benson) THIS PAGE: Forest Ferns © TNC (Ed Whitaker) NEXT PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT: Enjoying Open Farm Day at Sunny Valley Preserve, New Milford © TNC (Francine Monahan); Hemlocks at Burnham Brook Preserve, East Haddam © The Nature Conservancy



2017 LAND SUCCESSES

- Built Connecticut River campsite at Chapman Pond Preserve
- Implemented biocontrol releases of parasitic wasps to combat spread of emerald ash borer
- Restored habitat for the New England cottontail rabbit at Sunny Valley Preserve



Ethan Pfeiffer - Open Farm Day at Sunny Valley Preserve

M. Thayer Talbott, the Community Foundation's Vice President of Programs and Operations, echoed these sentiments adding that bringing people outside helps them understand their impact on the planet.

"When you come out here, you can see what's happening around you and the effect we all have on our world, and why it's important to stay involved, learn more, and take an active role in preservation," she said.

Our collaboration with the Community Foundation has provided The Conservancy with more resources to manage the land. For example, thanks to Community Foundation funds, Elizabeth recently purchased a brush cutter to tackle one of Dr. Goodwin's biggest concerns: invasive plant species.

"It's been amazing to have two organizations work together in a transparent and communicative way, making sure that this place remains as protected, as open, as awe-inspiring as Dick Goodwin would have wanted," Elizabeth said.



KEEPING THE PROMISE OF HEALTHY OCEANS

Nathan Frohling,
Dr. Kiki Kennedy
and Bun Lai
Stony Creek Beach
- Branford



MARINE. Protecting Our Oceans for People and Nature

Having grown up in Stamford, Connecticut. Chapter Trustee Dr. Kiki Kennedy has watched Long Island Sound throughout her life. Now a Branford resident, she maintains a strong connection to the Sound as a source of relaxation and fun for her family.

"I look out at the waves and I feel a sense of inner peace," she said one morning at Stony Creek Beach in Branford. "Connecticut has this incredible, wild region of nature right on our doorstep. It gives me a great feeling of comfort and wonder. I can look outside and know that

underneath the calmness of the water there's an incredible, vibrant ecosystem."

The Sound also provides a livelihood for renowned local sushi chef and sustainability activist Bun Lai. Protecting its water quality, as well as the fish and plant species living within it, is vital to his business, Miya's Sushi restaurant in New Haven, which specializes in sustainable meals centered around invasive fish and plant species.

"Over the last decade and a half, Miya's has made sustainable seafood a fundamental part of our cuisine," he said.

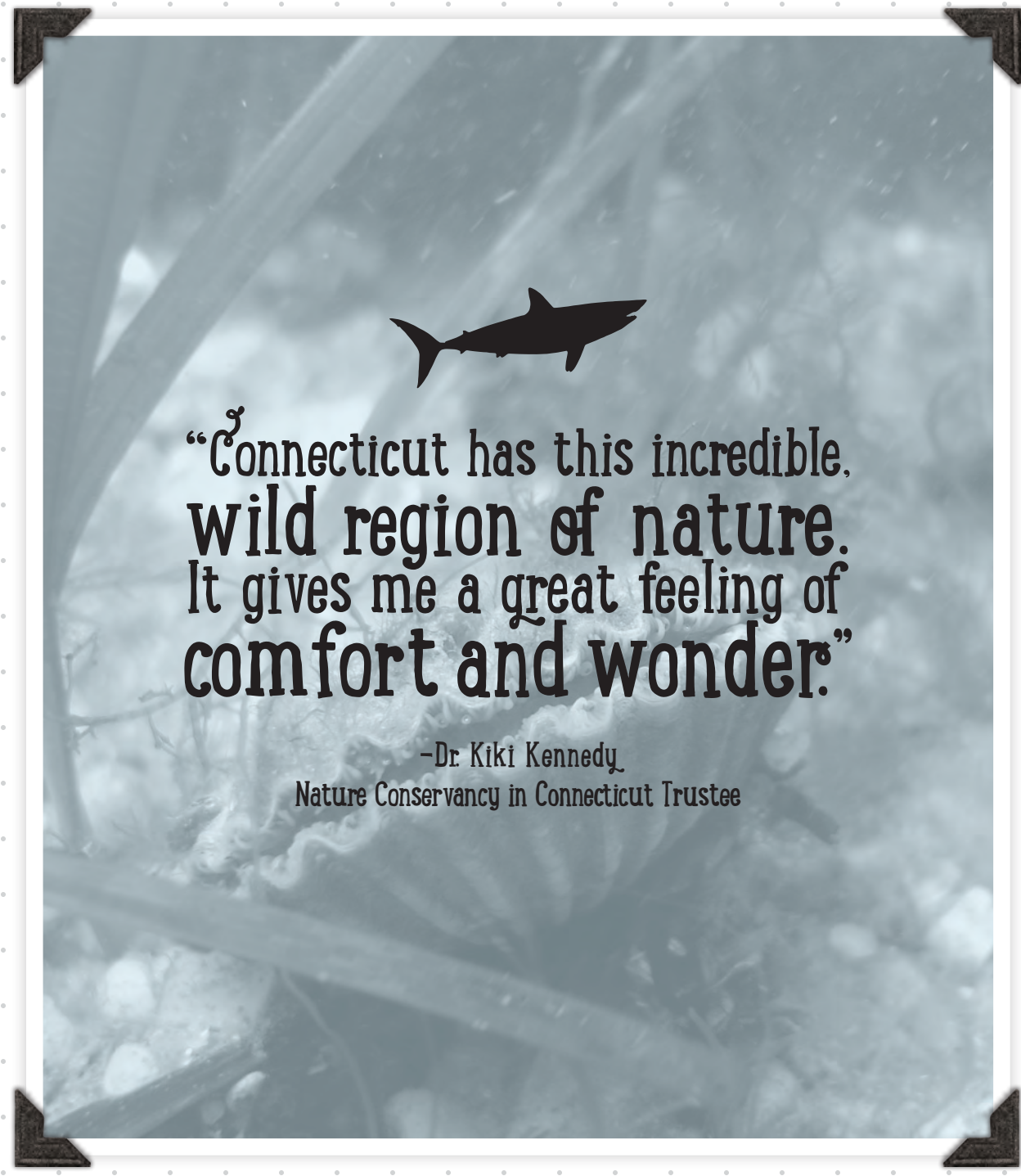


That's important because invasives are an ecological problem all over the world. What the Miya's team is doing here has inspired restaurants across the globe. Last year, Bun was recognized by the Obama Administration as a "Champion for Change" for pioneering sustainable seafood. Oceans are a major source of food for the world's 7.6 billion people, and healthy estuaries like Long Island Sound nurture and feed us.

Bun admires The Conservancy's efforts to protect and restore seagrass, where shellfish and juvenile fish live and grow. Our research and legislative influence keep Connecticut ahead of the curve in preserving the Sound, making this state an incubator for ideas and opportunities to collaborate across boundaries with New York and neighboring New England states.

That innovation includes our development and support of the Blue Plan, an initiative which aims to identify and protect ecologically significant areas, and transform the way the Sound is managed for commerce, transportation, recreation and conservation. As Nathan Frohling, the Conservancy's Director of Connecticut Coastal and Marine Initiatives, explained: "Long Island Sound supports an incredible nexus of productivity,

PREVIOUS PAGE: Nathan Frohling, The Nature Conservancy's Director of Connecticut Marine & Coastal Initiatives; Dr. Kiki Kennedy, Nature Conservancy in Connecticut trustee; Bun Lai, Chef and Owner, Miya's Sushi Restaurant © TNC (Andrew Benson) **THIS PAGE:** Bay scallop, Long Island Sound © The Nature Conservancy; **NEXT PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT:** Connecticut trustees and Conservancy staff examine shellfish during a board retreat © TNC (Andrew Benson); Eel grass in Long Island Sound © The Nature Conservancy



“Connecticut has this incredible, wild region of nature. It gives me a great feeling of comfort and wonder.”

—Dr. Kiki Kennedy
Nature Conservancy in Connecticut Trustee

Connecticut trustees and Conservancy staff examine shellfish during a Board retreat



biodiversity, and recreational human uses. At the same time, it's extremely important for commerce...[with] a lot of material transported to and through it."

The Blue Plan aims to help these sectors work together harmoniously and provide guidance on where future uses are sited so the Sound's environmental resources and traditional human uses are protected.

"The seafloor and waters of Long Island Sound are held in a public trust for the people of Connecticut and New York State, so they belong to all of us," Kiki said. "It's a wonderful feeling to know that if we adhere to the Blue Plan, we can continue to bring abundant food and other resources out of the Sound in a sustainable, environmentally sensitive way."



2017 MARINE SUCCESSES

- Assembled and reviewed hundreds of data sources and maps for the Long Island Sound's Blue Plan "Resource & Use Inventory," the Foundation for the Plan
- Conducted research in Saugatuck River, Mystic River and Stonington Harbor to assess public willingness to take action for cleaning streams, harbors and the Sound
- Conducted the first aerial survey of boating in the Sound to develop a baseline characterization of vessel types and patterns of use that may be impacting seagrass condition at Fishers Island

KEEPING THE PROMISE OF OUR CITIES



Mark Perkins, Esq. and Dr. Elizabeth McCance
The Seaside Village Stormwater Garden, Bridgeport

While sitting with Connecticut Chapter Trustee Dr. Elizabeth McCance in Bridgeport's Seaside Village stormwater garden that The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut helped build to reduce flood damage, Mark emphasized the city's need to think "green."

"There's so much character in the way Bridgeport was developed," he said. "It just needs to be brought forward, and for people to understand that it needs more green spaces, and fewer brown spaces."

Since its inception in 2013, the Connecticut Chapter's Cities program has collaborated with city officials and residents, and The Conservancy's own national and global staff on projects including tree-planting events, an outdoor classroom, and building bioswales (planted areas



CITIES: Making Cities Healthier and More Resilient

New Haven Attorney Mark Perkins worked in Bridgeport for more than a decade, during which he saw the city's potential to thrive.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Mark Perkins Esq, and Dr, Elizabeth McCance, The Seaside Village Stormwater Garden, Bridgeport © TNC (Andrew Benson)
THIS PAGE: Plantings in the Seaside Village Stormwater Garden © TNC (Andrew Benson) NEXT PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT: Volunteers plant trees in Bridgeport © TNC (Andrew Benson); Volunteers in the Seaside Village Stormwater Garden © TNC (Andrew Benson)



"Relying on government regulations doesn't cut it. We have to be more involved in taking care of our natural resources."

-Dr. Elizabeth McCance
Nature Conservancy in Connecticut Trustee

that absorb and filter rain runoff). All of which are helping to improve the health and well-being of Bridgeport's residents.

Having grown up in rural New Hampshire, Mark learned an early appreciation of the environment. He believes that The Conservancy can help inspire those who've never had access to natural spaces, and encourage younger generations to appreciate the planet.

"By planting areas like this stormwater garden, the Conservancy is giving the community a model from which to grow and learn," he said. "Helping people understand what the benefits are is really important, especially the health benefits. The Nature Conservancy is a resource for this."

Elizabeth believes that working in cities is visionary. "A lot of the work, in terms of doing community-based management, is the wave of the future," she said. "Just relying on government regulations doesn't cut it. We have to be much more involved in taking care of our natural resources."

Mark and Elizabeth believe in the importance of preparing future generations to protect the planet. Mark is a member of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, and Elizabeth is raising two daughters who, according to statistics, have a good chance of eventually becoming city dwellers.



Volunteers plant trees in Bridgeport



2017 CITIES SUCCESSES

- Engaged residents in planting more than 100 trees
- Developed a neighborhood-based vision describing how nature can support a healthy and vibrant community
- Worked with high school students to map and assess walking routes to school

“We also see a trend where more people are living on coastlines, and Bridgeport embodies both,” Elizabeth said. “Over the last decade we have lost the human/nature connection and The Nature Conservancy works to reinstate that connection.”

Elizabeth wants to dispel the myth that cities are bad for the environment (city residents have a smaller carbon footprint with smaller homes, little to no lawns, and often walkable lifestyles).

She points to our Louisville, KY, program, where we are measuring the impact of a green environment on human health, specifically cardiovascular health. Mark agrees, reminding everyone that the fate of the planet is in their hands.

“People are more aware of the environment because of all these storms we're having,” he said. “They can see the effects of not taking care of our planet, right in front of them.”



KEEPING THE PROMISE OF CLEAN, FREE-FLOWING WATER

Dr. David Skelly and Kimberly Lutz
The Connecticut River at Rocky Hill



FRESHWATER: Protecting Freshwater for People

When Connecticut River Program Director Kim Lutz asked Yale Peabody Museum President and Connecticut Chapter Trustee Dr. David Skelly for his favorite part of the Connecticut River, he didn't hesitate before answering.

“My favorite place is the mouth of the river, near Great Island and down where it comes into the Sound,” he said recently. “As an animal biologist, I see so much going on there. It's a constantly

changing waterscape. How the birds and fish are interacting with each other is just constantly moving. It's a wonderful place.”

Kim's favorite spot is the top of Mt. Holyoke (at Skinner State Park), near her Massachusetts home. The vista allows her to see the whole watershed from its Canadian-New Hampshire headwaters, to its mouth in Long Island Sound. It shows the program's scale, and the importance of preserving this watershed — and others like the Colorado, Yangtze and Colombia's Magdalena — for nature and people.



The Connecticut River program has three main focuses: (1) removing the thousands of obsolete dams in the watershed; (2) working with operators of dams that generate power, supply water or reduce flooding to see how they can store and release water differently for environmental benefits; and (3) protecting floodplain forests and managing land along the river that provide for people and nature. Healthy watersheds can help curb the effects of climate change, and protect highly populated areas like Hartford from flooding.

"Nature's pretty smart, putting these big sponges along the river," Kim said. "When the river goes out of its banks, floodplain forests absorb that water and store it, and let it out slowly.... As it releases back into the river, it's also cleaning it, filtering it and bringing nutrients from the river into the floodplain."

The importance of connecting people to nature is also part of the Connecticut River program. The Silvio O. Conte U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge shares its boundary with the watershed, and Kim chairs the Friends of Conte, a coalition of over 70 organizations. The Friends recognized that access connects people to the river, so they encouraged

PREVIOUS PAGE: Dr. David Skelly, Yale Peabody Museum President and Nature Conservancy in Connecticut trustee, and Kim Lutz, Nature Conservancy Connecticut River Program Director, walk the Connecticut River shore in Rocky Hill @ TNC (Andrew Benson)
THIS PAGE: Pristine Connecticut freshwater pond © The Nature Conservancy **NEXT PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT:** State Director Frogard Ryan releasing Atlantic salmon into the Jeremy River in Colchester as the DEEP's Steve Gephard looks on © TNC (Andrew Benson); Green frog in its habitat © The Nature Conservancy

"It's a constantly changing waterscape. Where the fish are, where the birds are, and how they're interacting with each other is constantly moving."

—Dr. David Skelly
 Yale Peabody Museum President and
 Nature Conservancy in Connecticut Trustee



the expansion of the Connecticut River Paddlers Trail with a goal of providing primitive campsites every 10 miles. One of these campsites sits proudly on one of The Conservancy's preserves at Chapman Pond.

"I think that's a fantastic concept," David said. "Think how much differently the public would think about the Appalachian Mountains without the Appalachian Trail."

What David has found exciting in the 20 years that he's been following The Conservancy's work is the organization's eagerness to take on conservation interventions in different ways, whether it's dams and floodplains, or partnering with chemical companies to change their business practices and reduce their impacts.



Releasing Atlantic salmon into the Jeremy River in Colchester



The Nature Conservancy

2017 FRESHWATER SUCCESSES

- Removed Norton Paper Mill dam in Colchester opening 17 miles of the Jeremy River
- Restored floodplains with disease-tolerant elm tree plantings at seven different sites
- Created Connecticut's first state water plan

"I've been thinking about that lately with the recent storms," he said.

"And this has to be the answer – to take these problems on where they are, with the partners that we absolutely need to work with."

KEEPING THE PROMISE OF A LIVEABLE EARTH

CLIMATE: It's About Places, Not Politics

This August, many families went to Waterford Town Beach to experience the solar eclipse. Kayakers paddled through the marsh to get a view from the water, and photographers set up tripods.

Laura di Bonaventura
and Cary White
Waterford Town Beach



Across the country, others did the same, connecting Connecticut to thousands of places. According to Connecticut Chapter Trustee Laura di Bonaventura, seeing the link between “my place” and the rest of the planet helps people respond to climate change.

“The Connecticut Chapter’s coastal resilience work is a great example of connecting places,” Laura said while discussing the Chapter’s work with Cary White, our Resilience and Urban Conservation Associate. “We can take our show on the road.”

“If we can focus people on place, local effects and local needs then we don’t have to talk about climate change as a big abstract thought.”

—Laura di Bonaventura
Nature Conservancy in Connecticut Trustee

Cary is optimistic about our influence on coastal communities. The successes the community resilience team has seen in Waterford and other shoreline towns have shown it’s possible to prepare communities for major storms. For 10 years, the Connecticut chapter has held workshops with town officials and residents in every coastal town across the state, to identify their needs and find natural solutions. The program’s success has led to its expansion inland to Massachusetts and New York. With one of the most developed shorelines in the country, Cary believes that if we can find solutions here in Connecticut, we can find them elsewhere.

The effects of climate change have made themselves known in recent years. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria affirmed how we must plan now for future disasters. Laura stresses the importance of mobilizing people to get involved and strengthening a community’s bond with nature to make climate change mitigation about place, not politics.

“Less carbon pollution is our insurance policy,” Laura said. “If we can focus people on place, local effects and local needs then we don’t have to talk about climate change as a big abstract thought. People are passionate about their local places, and it leaves politics at the door and allows for a dialogue about the causes and consequences.”

OPPOSITE PAGE: Laura di Bonaventura, Nature Conservancy in Connecticut trustee and Cary White, Resilience and Urban Associate, Nature Conservancy in Connecticut chat at Waterford Town Beach @ TNC (Andrew Benson); **THIS PAGE:** Waterford Town Beach @ TNC (Andrew Benson) **NEXT PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT:** Exploring the shores of Block Island © TNC (Andrew Benson); A marsh at Waterford Town Beach © TNC (Andrew Benson)

The wonders of the ocean, seen through a child's eyes



2017 CLIMATE SUCCESSES

- Established the state's first Regional Resilience Frameworks in southeastern and south-central Connecticut including greater Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London areas
- Implemented Community Resilience Building training and workshops with academic institutions in Los Angeles, Virginia, Connecticut, and Massachusetts via a Climate Commitment partnership with Second Nature
- Trained and certified over 250 Community Resilience Building Workshop Service Providers to conduct workshops in 66 municipalities as part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program

The time to prepare is now. We need to get started on moving new construction inland, which will take a lot of planning. Laura and Cary also recommend that citizens get involved at a local level to build awareness and impact legislation. Laura and other Trustees and staff on the CT Chapter's Climate Change Taskforce are working to empower people to raise awareness and help change policy, within CT and in other states.

"It's easy to forget that the recent storms affecting the Caribbean and the Gulf Coast could have happened almost anywhere on the Eastern Seaboard, as it did with SuperStorm Sandy five years ago," Cary said. "All of our communities are vulnerable and therefore we all have a part to play in reimagining how our neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions will grow going forward."



KEEPING THE PROMISE TO THE WHOLE WORLD



Rodrigo Galo and Pema Canales
Yale University,
New Haven

INTERNATIONAL: Making a Global Impact

Connecticut Chapter Trustee Dr. Rodrigo Canales has hope. He is hopeful for the future of the country, the planet and his children.

And as the Yale School of Management's Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior, much of his optimism stems from seeing the way young people view the world.



"When you look at the things that they're concerned about, the things they're devoting time to, what they're worried about... it is way more evolved than when I was in high school," he said. "They are truly concerned about the problems of the world in ways that give me enormous hope."

Rodrigo's passion for the world comes from his travels to places like China, India, Tibet and Nepal, and his Mexican citizenship. His two young children, Galo and Pema, also have a strong influence on his world views. Rodrigo sees climate change as a top concern. China and India, where TNC now works, have

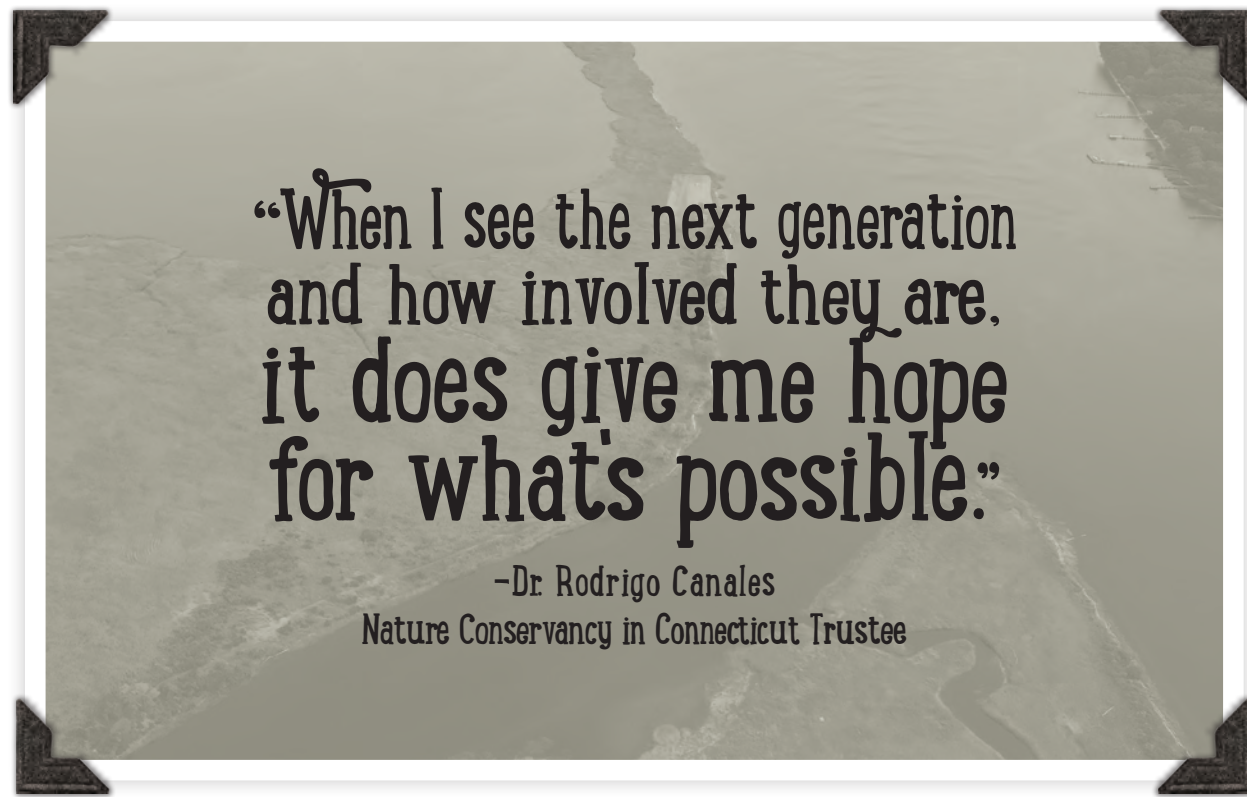
prioritized rapid growth while neglecting its environmental effects, and permafrost once prevalent in places like Nepal and Tibet is melting.

With conversations about climate change polarized in the United States, Rodrigo is worried that we will cross too many points of no return before we make progress. He sees potential in local action, though. If the federal government won't act, it's up to cities and states to get to work.

"It used to be that the nation state was the most important leader for innovation... for leadership," he said. "That has shifted, and cities and states have become much more important sources of innovation and leadership. I see a lot of hope in that."

Fortunately, The Conservancy's structure fits that mold. With chapters in all 50 states and a presence in 70 countries, we can work at the local level while having a global impact. Between building connections with think tank universities like Yale, and working closely with local leaders, we've positioned ourselves to make a global impact.

"The Nature Conservancy is a very influential local partner," Rodrigo said. "I think that the coastal resilience program is a perfect example of this, where we see The Nature Conservancy having an incredible amount of influence in cities across Connecticut and



"When I see the next generation and how involved they are, it does give me hope for what's possible."

-Dr. Rodrigo Canales
Nature Conservancy in Connecticut Trustee

PREVIOUS PAGE: Rodrigo, Galo and Pema Canales, at the Yale School of Management, New Haven © TNC (Andrew Benson) THIS PAGE: Aerial view of the mouth of the Connecticut River © Jerry Monkman

in the network of resilient cities it is trying to build around the world. That influence extends to how much it has shaped how these cities are thinking about their future and their resiliency."

With his young son Galo sitting on his lap, Rodrigo pondered what the future world will look like through his children's eyes. "I feel like in this generation, it's going to be one of the biggest shifts of intergenerational differences in how the world is actually experienced and what it looks like," he said.

"I do think we've created a lot of damage, but when I see the next generation that's coming up right now, and how smart they are and how involved they are, it does give me hope for what's possible."



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Your dedication helps us to meet local and global challenges

The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut wishes to thank the following donors for their support and service in fiscal year 2017. This list represents those who have contributed at least \$1,000 between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017, to the Conservancy's local, national and international conservation work.

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